UNIVERSITY OF HULL

THE FICTION OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA: IRONY WITHIN A DUAL PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

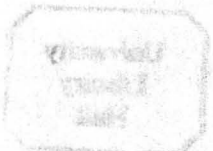
Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Fadillah Fatimah Merican
B.A. Auckland University, New Zealand
M.A. Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand

June 1990



Summary of Thesis submitted for PhD

by Fadillah Merican

on

The Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala : Irony Within a Dual Philosophical Framework

The thesis examines how Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, writing from the ironic perspective of the rootless, displaced European writer, utilises a dual framework of Hindu philosophy and religious tradition, and Platonic thought on Love to augment the ironic narrative of her Indian and Western novels. The framework is discerned in allusions as well as fluid suggestions and associations to the Bhagavad Gita, The Symposium, moral precepts, ideals, cultural norms, myth and folk - tales.

Northrop Frye's schema for narrative fiction as developed in Anatomy of Criticism provides a useful theoretical basis for the study . In particular the phases or literary structures of the comic and ironic mythoi, together with the typical traditional characters of comedy and irony —— the deceiving and self - deceived alazon, the self - deprecating eiron and the scapegoat, the pharmakos —— facilitate a grouping of the novels that corresponds to Jhabvala's darkening ironic viewpoint. The moral paradigms that operate in each novel are integrated with the particular features of the ironic mythos it manifests,to highlight the discrepancy between ideal and reality, between what is hoped for and what is achieved. The analysis traces how the Hindu framework enhances the workings of Jhabvala's irony in the first two groups of ironic comedies and comic ironies. In the group of later and darker ironies, Hindu and Platonic ideas are ironic foils to the quests of Western spiritual seekers in India. Finally in the two Western novels the hopeless search for Love and Beauty features ironic parallels to and inversions of Platonic and classical ideals and archetypes.

The thesis is thus primarily a close reading of Jhabvala's ironic fiction. It also offers a perspective on contemporary fiction; as the work of the initiated - outsider her Indian writing suggests a contrast to that of new literatures in English which call upon cultural and traditional heritage mainly to highlight national identity and vitality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS i

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS ii

PART ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE THE FICTION OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA 1

i) A Biographical Introduction 1
ii) Ruth Prawer Jhabvala within the Indo-Anglian Tradition 17
iii) Ruth Prawer Jhabvala within the Anglo-Indian Tradition 32

CHAPTER TWO IRONIC FICTION WITHIN A DUAL PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK 58

PART TWO: THE NOVELS 87

A THE INDIAN NOVELS

CHAPTER THREE THE IRONIC COMEDIES 87

Introduction 87
To Whom She Will 93
The Nature of Passion 112
The Householder 136

CHAPTER FOUR THE COMIC IRONIES 159

Introduction 159
Esmond in India 168
Get Ready for Battle 189
A Backward Place 211

CHAPTER FIVE THE LATER-PHASE IRONIES 233

Introduction 233
A New Dominion 245
Heat and Dust 273

B THE WESTERN NOVELS

CHAPTER SIX THE COMIC IRONY OF IN SEARCH OF LOVE AND BEAUTY 296

Introduction [for Western novels] 296
In Search of Love and Beauty 307

CHAPTER SEVEN THE FIFTH-PHASE IRONY OF THREE CONTINENTS 338

Three Continents 338

CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSION 366

NOTES 380

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF REFERENCES 397

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Marion Shaw my supervisor. Generously, with perceptivity, care and energy she has helped me with so many draft-readings, corrections and suggestions.

I should like to thank the members of the English Department for their encouragement and help.

Finally I wish to record my gratitude to the Public Services Department of the Malaysian Government and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for granting me a scholarship and leave for study.

To Ibrahim,
Anis, Hashmi and Zubin

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Figure 1: Cyclical and dialectical pattern of the four mythoi.

2. Figure 2: Parallel relations among the phases of the four mythoi.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Primary works and a number of specific texts (Section B) which have been documented parenthetically throughout this study are listed below with abbreviations, where used, and the editions used for page references.

The primary works are listed chronologically.

A. Texts by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

1. Novels

To Whom She Will, [1955] — TWW
1985. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

The Nature of Passion, [1956] — NP
1986. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

Esmond in India, [1958] — EI
1980. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

The Householder, [1960] — TH
1980. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

Get Ready for Battle, [1962] — GRB
1981. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

A Backward Place, [1965] — BP
1980. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

A New Dominion, [1972] — ND
1983. Panther Books: London

Heat and Dust, [1975] — HD
1976. Futura Publications: London

In Search of Love and Beauty, [1983] — IS
1984. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

Three Continents, [1987] — TC
1987. John Murray: London

2. Short Story Collections

Like Birds, Like Fishes, [1963] — LBLF
1984. Panther Books: London

A Stronger Climate, [1968] — ASC
1983. Panther Books: London

An Experience of India, [1971] — AEI
1971. John Murray: London

How I Became a Holy Mother and other stories, [1976] — HIBAHM
1981. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

3. Uncollected Short Stories

'Before the Wedding', New Yorker,
28 Dec. 1957, pp. 28-32

'Better than Dead', New Yorker,
24 May 1958, pp. 30-36

'The Elected', New Yorker,
20 April 1960, pp. 40-45

'Wedding Preparations', Kenyon Review,
23, 1961, pp. 408-422

'Light and Reason', New Statesman,
19 July 1963, pp. 73-74

'Foreign Wives', London Magazine,
NS 7, No. 10, 1968, pp. 12-22

'A Very Special Fate', New Yorker,
29 March 1978, pp. 34-43

'A Summer by the Sea', New Yorker,
7 Aug. 1978, pp. 26-34

'Commensurate Happiness', Encounter,
54, No. 1, 1980, pp. 3-11

'Grandmother', New Yorker,
17 Nov. 1980, pp. 54-62

'Expiation', New Yorker,
11 Oct. 1982, pp. 44-51

'Farid and Farida', New Yorker,
15 Oct. 1984, pp. 40-43

4. Non-Fiction Writing

'The Short-Story in England 1700-1750:
A Contribution to the Study of Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century.
M.A. thesis, 1951. Queen Mary College: Univesity of London.

* 'Cakes and Ale', Writers Workshop Miscellany,
No. 8, 1961, pp. 53-54.
(Contribution to a special issue entitled 'A Garland for Shaun Mandy').

* 'Of Love and Sorrow', Writers Workshop Miscellany,
No. 12, 1962, pp. 31-55.

'Open City. Letter from Delhi', Encounter,
22, No. 5, 1964, pp. 40-44.

'Introduction, Myself in India'. In An Experience of India, 1971. John Murray: London.
(1st British appearance as 'Living Abroad - III', London Magazine, NS 10, No. 5, 1970, pp. 41-50).

'Moonlight, Jasmine and Rickets', New York Times,
22 April 1975. Sec.1, p. 35.

'Disinteritence', Blackwood's Magazine,
July 1979, pp. 4-14.

'India Overpowered Me', (letter) Sunday Times,
3 Aug. 1980, p. 11.

Note: The asterisked references in this sub-section and the screenplays given in the sub-section below are texts the researcher has not had access to.

5. Screenplays and Television Plays
(in collaboration with Merchant Ivory Productions unless otherwise stated)

The Householder, 1963

Shakespeare Wallah, 1965

The Guru, 1969

Bombay Talkie, 1970

Autobiography of a Princess, 1975

The Place of Peace [television play], 1975. Shown on Granada Television, 4 May 1975.

Roseland, 1977

Hullabaloo Over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures, 1978

The Europeans, 1979

An Experience of India [television play], 1980. Shown on B.B.C. Television, 27 April 1980.

Jane Austen in Manhattan [television play], 1980

Quartet, 1981

Heat and Dust, 1983

The Bostonians, 1984

Room With a View, 1986

B. Other Texts

The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War. BG
(trans.) Barbara Stoler Miller, 1986
Bantam Books: New York

Plato, The Symposium. SYM
(trans.) Walter Hamilton, 1951
Penguin Classics: Harmondsworth

Plato, Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII. PHA
(trans.) Walter Hamilton, 1973
Penguin Classics: Harmondsworth

Northrop Frye, 1957. Anatomy of Criticism. AC
Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey

C. Bibliographies

Ralph J. Crane, 1985. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: A Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources', Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol. XX, No. 1, 1985, pp. 171-203.

Brijen Gupta, 1973. India in English Fiction 1800-1970, An Annotated Bibliography. The Scacerow Press Inc: Metuchen, New Jersey.

David Piet, 1971. 'Bibliography: Secondary Sources on Indian Fiction in English', Literature East and West, 15 March 1971, pp. 74-81.

A. Singh, R. Verma and I. M. Joshi, 1981. Indian Literature in English 1827-1979. Gale Research Company Book Tower: Detroit, Michigan.

Dorothy M. Spencer, 1960. Indian Fiction in English: An Annotated Bibliography. University of Pennyslavania Press: Philadelphia.

PART ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

THE FICTION OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA

i) A Biographical Introduction

Ruth Prawer was born on 7th May 1927 in Cologne, Germany, of Polish/Jewish parents, Marcus Prawer a lawyer, and his wife Leonora Cohn. The repressive Nazi regime saw the mass emigration of Jewish families out of Germany and Marcus Prawer and his family, unable to obtain visas for America, emigrated to England in 1939 just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Ruth and her brother Siegbert (currently Professor of German Language and Literature at Oxford University) had learnt the English language in Germany, but it was only after 1939, in England, that Ruth became proficient in the language. During her school and college years she 'had cupboards stuffed full with unfinished novels, plays, stories' (Agarwal 1974: 33).

Growing up in England included studying at the Hendon Country School near London, completing a degree in English Literature at the University of London and an M.A. thesis on 'The Short Story in England 1700-1750' in 1951. Also in 1951, she married Cyrus Jhabvala, a Parsi and a student of architecture and soon after, in the same year, at the age of twenty-four Jhabvala left Britain to begin married life in India. After twelve years in England she brought with her to India an academic training, a natural love for writing and the impact of personal experiences that would influence her later writing: the fear and trauma of living in Hitler's Germany, the slow and difficult process of adapting to new surroundings in England, the death in concentration camps of her father's entire family and many of the members of her mother's family, school and family friends, and finally Marcus Prawer's suicide in 1948.(1)

The early years in India saw Jhabvala once again settling into a new culture, the birth of three daughters between 1953 and 1960 and the publication of four novels: To Whom She Will (1955), (American title, Amrita); The Nature of Passion (1956); Esmond in India (1957) and The Householder (1960). Between 1961 and 1975, four more novels were published. These were Get Ready for Battle (1962); A Backward Place (1965); A New Dominion (1973) (American title, Travelers) and Heat and Dust (1975). There were also three collections of short stories: Like Birds, Like Fishes (1963); A Stranger Climate (1968) and An Experience of India (1971)

In 1975 Jhabvala was awarded the prestigious Booker Prize for Heat and Dust.(2) This was also the year in which, after a quarter of a century in India, Jhabvala moved to New York where she still lives. The move to America was the final outcome of increasingly frequent visits there - the result of her increased work with the film company Merchant Ivory Productions, the need to be closer to her daughters who were at American universities and more importantly a growing unhappiness with living in India. She is now a citizen of the United States because like India it is 'big' and a land of 'contrasts'; it is also the most European of continents and 'If I was to go on writing ... I just felt I had to be here' (Shapiro 1987: M3).

After the move to America the collected short stories How I Became a Holy Mother was published in 1976. Then came In Search of Love and Beauty (1983) her first novel with a Western setting. A special edition of previously published collected stories titled Out of India was published in 1986. Her last novel is Three Continents (1987). From the 1960s Jhabvala contributed short stories (and continues to do so) to periodicals like The New Yorker and Encounter. Many of the collected short stories first appeared in the periodicals. Whilst most of the more recent

uncollected short stories have Western settings, Indian short stories continue to appear in The New Yorker[3] - evidence not only of her continued link with India in her annual three-month visits there to be with her husband during the Delhi winter, but also of the ties forged in a twenty-five year 'immersion'.

Jhabvala is best known in the West as a writer of comedies about Indians. In the light of more recent successes and publicity since her move to New York, she is possibly now known to Americans for her stories of Western seekers (particularly women) in India and America and the theme of spiritual quest in relation to bogus guru-figures, fake organizations and undeserving men. Her accent is on social satire; her forte the female psyche. Her ironic view of life and manners, whether it is of urban, post-Independence India or the upper middle-class New York of European refugees, is sometimes sharply critical. Her language is spare, usually with little imagery. The apparent simplicity of her writing, and her tendency to understate, allows the alert reader the chance to perceive the hidden meaning behind the surface statement. Her bitterest irony is for the exploiters and exploitation of the many fallible characters who people her novels.

The novels show the author's concern to portray life stripped of its illusions. Writing of Jhabvala's portrayal of deluded protagonists, Sucher remarks:

> Authorial legerdemain enables us to see double, as it were: at once to validate and acknowledge the 'dark' side, and to hold it up to the light of reason and the ironic amusement that reason brings.
>
> (Sucher 1989: 7)

The delusions and vulnerability of her seekers are seen in the context of the human search for fulfilment and happiness. We view delusions,

weaknesses and whims with 'compassion, and with irony'. In the same way the debilitating effects of life in India are counterpointed by our knowledge that India can provide a degree of self-knowledge for the Westerner. In the early novels of Indian family life, the movement of the stories oscillates between comedy and irony; in the more pessimistic later novels, between the romantic quest and the ironic reality of it.

Jhabvala's visit to England in 1960 is often cited as the incident that triggered off her disillusionment with India:

> I saw people eating in London, everyone had clothes and everything in me began to curdle about India. I returned and ... felt lonely, friendless, cut-off. I suddenly felt a sense of humiliation to be living in the twentieth century in a place like this ... I didn't want to belong here.
>
> (Unsigned article 1973: 31)

One senses however, that the intensity of the Englishman Esmond's revulsion towards India in Esmond in India, published two years before the visit, already indicates Jhabvala's own growing inability to ignore the poverty and suffering. The India that she arrived at was a country in transition, buoyed by Independence and self-rule, yet saddled with social, political and economic problems brought on by years of anti-British revolutionary activities, the Indians' own divisive power struggles and the bloody aftermath of the Partition of 1947. The modernization programme included the application of Western knowledge and know-how with the development of a sense of Indian identity drawn partly from tradition and created afresh with the new circumstances of the times (Lamb 1975: v-vi). Nehru's plans included the development of industries large and small, an Indianization programme that included Hindi as the national language, and a massive community development in the form of better educational facilities, family planning and rights for women. It is these facets of post-Independence development and the currents and cross-currents of

change that come under Jhabvala's ironic scrutiny. The effects of rapid, ill-organized urban growth, the misery of the poor and outcasts, the materialism, corruption and self-seeking of the affluent and rich, and the community prejudices will form integral parts of Jhabvala's ironic studies of Indian manners.

In the Introduction to An Experience of India titled "Myself in India", Jhabvala writes of the cycle of attitudes of the foreigner towards India:

> It goes like this: first stage, tremendous enthusiasm - everything Indian marvellous; second stage, everything Indian not so marvellous; third stage, everything Indian abominable.
>
> (AEI: 7)

Of her own particular experience of this cycle she adds:

> I have been through it so many times that now I think of myself as strapped to a wheel that goes round and round and sometimes I'm up and sometimes I'm down.
>
> (AEI: 7)

For Jhabvala the cycle began with her initial rapture over the sights, smells and sounds of India: 'I really loved it ... and never wanted to go away from here' (Agarwal 1974: 34). Later this changed to an awareness of the poverty in India, a horror of the suffering, a disillusionment with the rich and powerful and finally an anguish so debilitating that she had to leave India

There is a discernible change of tone in Jhabvala's Indian fiction, from the 'sunny' comedies of domestic life to the more pessimistic ironies of divided families and dark ironies of exploitation and victimization. They reflect changing phases and attitudes of Jhabvala's residence in India. Her early years were spent in a fairly traditional Indian middle-class world. She speaks of exposure to Hindu family life through close

association with the extended family of her husband's Indian partner and observation of the families around her (May 1975: 55). Marriage into the Parsi community who are of Persian stock, distinctive, and wealthy, meant Jhabvala would be in the company of the rich and affluent, people she came increasingly to distrust.[4] Yet later, it is as twice-removed outsider, as foreigner and wife of a Parsi that Jhabvala was able to isolate herself in her room to write. It was an attempt to distance herself from India which nevertheless 'is there pulsing outside the door' (Moorehead 1975: 16).[5]

In a comment on her later Indian novels Jhabvala said:

> All those Indian paradoxes and comical situations that Western writers especially like to exploit and make fun of - e.g., the B.A. failed, the banya [money-lender] praying with one hand and giving false weight with the other - well perhaps one laughs at first (I'm afraid I used to laugh more than I should in my early books) - but afterwards you see that it is not comic at all but quite the opposite. Then one stops laughing, at which point perhaps one's writing opens up?
>
> (Agarwal 1974: 34)

Jhabvala's Indian novels reflect this gradual shift of attitude to India's paradoxes which reflect larger issues of national progress and identity. In the early novels even as traditional elders clash with more liberal and modern children, there is a sense of vitality and hope in the future as Indians prepare for progress and self-rule. In To Whom She Will this is located in the intelligent and sensible Bengali lovers Amrita and Krishna Sen; in The Nature of Passion we see the energy and canny business sense of Punjabis like Lalaji who manage to rebuild their lives and wealth in India after the Partition and the mass migration into India. Even in the less cheerful Esmond in India a young doctor's work in a distant rural district of India is as much a part of modernization and nation-building

as the more widely-acclaimed programmes to Indianize every facet of post-Independence life.

Yet this view of a nation being reborn into independence and identity is constantly undercut by ironic exposure of muddle, self-interest, greed and corruption. It has early expression in the images of poverty and suffering of an India older and poorer than the scenes of family feasting, earnest tea-meetings of Delhi matrons for rural uplift and cocktail parties. With the shift in attitudes the stories develop against a background of exploitation of the poor and homeless (Get Ready for Battle), of the pleasures and immorality of the traditionally rich as well as the new moneyed business class (Esmond in India and A Backward Place). In Esmond in India the inter-relationships of two families in Delhi are seen against a background of the post-Gandhian struggles where those who had nothing to do with the revolutionary struggle enjoy the wealth and affluence of the new India. The setting of a darker, problem-ridden India continues in A New Dominion and Heat and Dust as, despite the superficial signs of progress and modernity, India and Indians are snares for the unwary Westerner. In these two novels and the earlier A Backward Place, Western protagonists at varying degrees of acceptance or rejection of India not only mirror Jhabvala's love-hate relationship with her adopted country; they also reflect the writer's assertion of her Europeanness and the fact that:

> I am no longer interested in India. What I am interested in now is myself in India.
>
> (AEI: 8)

In 'Myself in India' Jhabvala writes:

> We may ... go into raptures over Indian music ... not for one moment should we lose sight of the fact that a very great number of Indians never get enough to eat ... that ... they

> never cease to suffer from hunger. Can we lose sight of the fact? God knows I've tried.
>
> (AEI: 8)

The subjects, themes and characterization of Jhabvala's fiction may be related to Jhabvala's professed attempt to 'lose sight' of the fact of India's poverty and the failure of this attempt as her fiction moves from comedies of family conflict to bleak studies of hopeless quests for fulfilment.

Esmond in India takes up the tradition-modernity theme of To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion. Whilst the young protagonists of the earlier works are reclaimed from romantic involvements and previous rebelliousness through ties of affection, loyalty and tradition, the fate of Shakuntala, who has had a one-night affair with Esmond, is left open-ended. Esmond, the first Western protagonist, introduces the theme of East-West relations and conflict, a theme that will feature, to a lesser or greater extent in all her subsequent novels.

The Householder continues the subject of domestic tension and marital problems, this time in the context of a young householder's first year of married life. The growth of love develops with the gradual erosion of Prem's earlier aspirations and ambitions in the face of the materialistic indifference of his elders. Prem and Indu's love is one of the few examples of married love in Jhabvala's work: nevertheless, the novel in a way signals the darkening landscape of Jhabvala's later novels.

In Get Ready for Battle, the materialism and indulgence of upper class Delhi life shown in Esmond in India, is further highlighted. Affluence and acquisition of wealth and preoccupation with money, status and security provide the back drop for Jhabvala's only social-problem novel. The problem of housing for the poor of the Bundi Busti district of Delhi is central to the novel causing the protagonists to come into

conflict. The housing problem for the destitute and their threatened displacement by social workers (more concerned for their public image than for the homeless), is the kind of suffering and mismanagement Jhabvala comments on in her non-fiction writing. In 'Open City, Letter from Delhi' (1964)[6] the targets of Jhabvala's irony are the uncaring rich and powerful, and the 'widely-travelled, 'knowing' and 'Westernized' Indians.

A Backward Place shows aspects of Jhabvala's writing not so much about India and Indians but of 'myself in India', of foreigners like her caught in various stages of the cycle of acceptance of India. The comedy is subdued as Jhabvala posits various degrees of coming to terms with living in India. For the ageing Hungarian beauty Etta, frustration is epitomized in the debilitating heat and dust and the expanse of a sky too wide and too blue. Like Jhabvala's, her curtains are always drawn. For Judy, the sky sometimes speaks, strengthening her against doubts and fears. In Judy's quiet strength and resigned acceptance is possibly the only way to survive in India. She projects the ambivalence and difficulties of being the European in India. Jhabvala writes:

> Sometimes it seems to me how pleasant it would be to say yes and give in and wear a sari and be meek and accepting and see God in a cow. Other times it seems worthwhile to be defiant and European and - all right, be crushed by one's environment but all the same have made some attempt to remain standing.
>
> (AEI: 19-20)

Jhabvala's Western protagonists will show to a greater or lesser degree either (Eastern) surrender or (Western) pragmatism; those who 'remain standing' are better able to survive.

The gap of seven years between A Backward Place and A New Dominion is filled by short story collections: An Experience of India and A Stronger Climate. The stories in these two collections focus on women: their search for love and companionship, for artistic fulfilment, and for

spiritual transcendence. The choices they make often involve sacrifice and suffering. In A Stronger Climate the emphasis is on East-West relations where Westerners come to India 'no longer to conquer but to be conquered' (ASC: epigraph). These stories of lovers and questers of transcendence are divided into two sections, 'The Seekers' and 'The Sufferers', but the open-endedness of the stories about the 'Seekers' places them in the same category as the 'Sufferers'.

The theme of alienation seen in the displacement suffered by many of the characters of A Backward Place, and the search for fulfilment through India's spirituality and art are expanded in A New Dominion. Rootless spiritual questers seek a sense of belonging from a *swami* (a religious teacher or guide) greedy for material and sexual power. Others seek compensation for different degrees of alienation and loneliness by finding ways to belong and survive in the new dominion of India. In the end it is the surrender to sexual passion and narcissistic and exploitative lovers that eventually destroys the questing protagonists.

Jhabvala commented:

> Surviving and seeing how far you can survive in India is the theme of Heat and Dust.
>
> (Moorehead 1975: 16)

She wrote it because 'I think I want to withdraw from contemporary India'. Jhabvala's only historical novel partly set in the Raj of the 1920s is a double-layered novel of the almost identical stories of two women, Olivia in the earlier period and her nameless step-granddaughter of forty years later. In reconstructing and re-living the older woman's quest for love, the modern narrator conducts her own quest for fulfilment. The two womens' 'survival', that is their struggle to stay on, consists partly of being 'defiant and European' (AEI: 20) and partly of a wisdom to accept

things as they are. Yet Olivia's story is one of pain and suffering and like many of the women characters of the short stories, the nature of Olivia's last years and the future for the modern narrator remain uncertain.

Jhabvala's study of the female psyche continues with How I Became a Holy Mother, published after the move to America. Survival is the theme of these stories of older women in their relations with unworthy men: these are women who have come to terms with their own needs and limitations. East-West conflict and themes of the displacement of the foreigner in India are absent, an indication perhaps that with the move to the West artistic portrayals of 'myself in India' were no longer central to her work. 'Desecration' the last of Jhabvala's collected short stories (and most probably one of the last stories Jhabvala wrote in India) epitomizes the change that occurred in Jhabvala's writing as her disillusionment with India increased. It is a violent, sexually-explicit account of a woman's choice for sexual fulfilment, the humiliation she suffers at the hands of her lover, the district Superintendent of Police, a man of peasant background, and her eventual suicide.

In In Search of Love and Beauty, Marietta, one of the seekers finds fulfilment in her sarod-playing Indian lover Ahmad, her visits to India and her friendship with Sujata a singer who loves life and falling in love. With each visit, India loses its excitement for Marietta. Her feelings about India, capture the receding importance of India to Jhabvala's writing. In 1985, in answer to an interviewer's question, Jhabvala admitted she had exhausted India as a topic (Blackwell 1985: 47). Yet in her subsequent novel Three Continents, the quest for happiness for the Wishwell twins takes them to India in the last of the novel's three sections. India is the kingdom of Dhoka, dangerous and mysterious where the half-Indian Crishi wields complete control over his

wife Harriet Wishwell. Jhabvala therefore has not really 'exhausted India as a subject', rather her perspective has changed with her move to the West.

According to Jhabvala 'after India, I find only America really, really big and coarse and bizarre and desperate enough' (Weinraub 1983: 112). There was no parallel period of rapturous initiation as in India; she continued the solitary life she led in Delhi. Themes of the later Indian fiction are carried over: the seekers of happiness of the Indian novels, young women like Lee of A New Dominion and homosexuals like Harry in Heat and Dust and Raymond in A New Dominion, find new *avatars* or rebirths and a new setting in the first Western novel In Search of Love and Beauty. Like so many of the earlier protagonists, the seekers' romantic quest for love and transcendence is counterpointed with failure and pain yet with each setback there is an ironic reaffirmation of the quest only in terms of the senses. Descriptive details of countryside, of buildings, of food and of haunts of old-generation German refugees, echo the attention to detail of Jhabvala's descriptions of modern Delhi in her Indian novels.

Jhabvala has written comparatively few Western short stories. These stories like 'Parasites' (1978), 'A Summer by the Sea' (1978), 'Commensurate Happiness' (1980) 'Grandmother' (1980) and two early works 'A Birthday in London' (LBLF: 116-131) and 'Foreign Wives' (1986), have themes which are early expressions of those of Jhabvala's two Western novels: the isolation and loneliness of displacement; rootlessness and estrangement; the persistent quest for belonging and love despite disappointments, humiliation or indifference from unworthy objects of love. The last two short stories, with their German-Jewish families coming to terms with displacement, are early blueprints for In Search of Love and Beauty.

Since 1961 when Jhabvala was approached by James Ivory and Ismail Merchant of the then Ivory Merchant Company, to write the screenplay for her novel The Householder, the very successful Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala collaboration has resulted in many highly-acclaimed films. Among the most successful are Shakespeare Wallah (1965), The Guru (1969); Bombay Talkie (1970), Autobiography of a Princess (1975), Roseland (1977) and Heat and Dust (1983). Jhabvala has also adapted for the screen Henry James' The Europeans, 1975, and The Bostonians in 1984. In 1986, the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala collaboration on E.M. Forster's Room With a View won two awards: first the BAFTA (British Academy of Film and TV Arts Award) for best feature film and secondly an Oscar at the American Academy Awards for best screenplay adaptation from another medium. Writing for the cinema particularly after the Booker Prize Award and the Merchant-Ivory successes have popularized Jhabvala's work. More importantly, her experience in the world of film has helped refine her art.

In an interview in 1975, Jhabvala sees two main influences from film. The personal one is that it has allowed her to travel more, to meet different peoples and places: '... my early books were all set in Delhi but later on I do branch out and travel'. The other influence is technical. Jhabvala mentions her experience in the editing room, learning 'to cut a film ... and shuffle it about to bring out the stronger scenes, to off-set them, to use counterpoint' (Rutherford and Peterson 1975: 377). This is translated in the short, strategically-placed chapters (with highly visual titles) of A New Dominion and the parallel incidents, personalities, places and seasons of the stories of two women in Heat and Dust. In In Search of Love and Beauty the events of a story that spans Germany of the 1920s to New York of the 1980s are arranged unchronologically for contrast and counterpoint. The device of flashbacks and cut-aways of film are employed time and again in Heat and Dust and in

In Search of Love and Beauty. Visual effects derived from film are utilized in the later novels, in the descriptions of places and buildings. In In Search of Love and Beauty a description of the Old Vienna hotel in its hey-day in the 1930s as the place Louise and Regi regularly meet to talk about their mentor, Leo Kellermann, is followed by a description of a meeting of the same women at the same place forty years later (IS: 40). Present and past are linked and the reader imagines the camera focussing perhaps on one of Regi's rings, fading out and then focussing again on a more ornate ring of an older Regi of the eighties.

Jhabvala's work in films reflects the major themes that dominate her fiction. Shakespeare Wallah, The Guru, Bombay Talkie and Autobiography of a Princess focus on Westerners attempting to come to terms with India. Gooneratne observes that the films are 'externalizations of their creator's personal and artistic problems of living (and "surviving") in India' (Gooneratne 1983: 269). Disenchanted views of modern India are presented in Shakespeare Wallah and Bombay Talkie as India's popular film industry caters to the crude public taste at the expense of finer pursuits. In The Guru, a pop singer and his girl friend place their faith and musical education in a music teacher too involved in his own emotional problems to guide the Westerners towards an appreciation of India, or its music. The later film Roseland, with its setting of a New York dancing hall and its elderly European clients, affords an early study of the loneliness, loss and disinheritance of the European refugees of In Search of Love and Beauty.

On life in New York, Jhabvala said:

> I met the people who should have remained in my life - people I went to school with in Cologne with exactly the same background as my own ....
>
> (Weinraub 1983: 112)

Yet she acknowledges that she has found a kind of India in Manhattan: 'the decaying elements do loom large in American life. There is so much poverty'. She concludes, 'all my life work seems to end up being about parasites and perverts; (Owen 1978: 30). In a very real sense the dark view of human aspirations in Three Continents can be discerned even in the early Indian novels. The breaking up of the well-established Wishwell family by 'perverts and parasites' who prey on the Wishwell millions has an ironic parallel even in an early comedy like The Nature of Passion. Lalaji's family members stay together, united mainly by their materialism and selfishness. If the Wishwell twins are victims of others' greed and their own credulity, Lalaji and his children are victims of their own wealth.

Meenakshi Mukherjee has commented that Jhabvala's 'outsider' situation (and success as a writer) is a reminder to writers that: 'in order to exploit their situation they must peregrinate and remain 'unhoused', and not get caught in their own self-created grooves'(Mukherjee 1978: 91).

Jhabvala's Indian novels are born out of the working of a European sensibility on material which is non-European. The creative impulse is her 'imprisonment' by India. With each new environment, the 'alien' writer creates her fiction to gain a kind of foothold. Jhabvala has said:

> My books may appear objective but really I think they are the opposite. I describe the Indian scene not for its own sake but for mine.
>
> (Harrex 1972: 678)

Thus it is with some apprehension that one reads of Jhabvala's enthusiastic account of the people, the smells and sounds of Manhattan as bringing back memories of her German past. There is the possibility that she may finally be housed. Her creative impulse requires that she be a

'prisoner' of New York. One notes with relief therefore that alongside the 'euphoria' (though in no way comparable to the initial euphoria over India) Jhabvala can comment on her life and work in these terms:

> I am a born outsider, always looking in through windows. I would love to stay in one place, but I'll never settle down, never accept a place as home.
>
> (Owen 1978: 30)

As with India, Jhabvala will stay in New York to hear 'all the pain in the world'. As with India too she will not be able to accept. As a writer in a free state, it seems fitting that Jhabvala should find James Joyce's 'Silence, exile and cunning' as the 'classic definition' of the writer's life:

> "This I interpret for myself to mean that I must keep my mouth shut, stay aloof from the world around me and carry on my business like a thief in the night, pillaging what I need and hoarding it in the secret recesses of my imagination to make of it what I can."
>
> (Jhabvala quoted in Gooneratne 1983: epigraph)

It is hoped that as 'outsider' and 'alien', Jhabvala's ambivalence towards and interest in America will be inexhaustible.

ii) Ruth Prawer Jhabvala Within The Indo-Anglian Tradition

Indo-Anglian literature refers to works about India by Indians or writers of Indian stock. It is both an Indian literature and a variation of English literature (Iyengar 1975: 5).[7] It is Indian literature because Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks. It is a variation of English literature in that it is creative work greatly influenced by writing in England. In addition, since the 1930s the works of Indian writers have made substantial contributions to the novel in English.

Indo-Anglian fiction goes as far back as 1864, but it was only in the 1930s that it moved away from being writing meant to please the Raj and to introduce India to an English readership. It was Raja Rao (b. 1909), R.K. Narayan (b. 1907) and Mulk Raj Anand (b. 1905) who defined the future of the Indian novel. They established the suppositions, idiom, concept of character and themes distinctive to Indo-Anglian fiction (Walsh 1983: 247) for later writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya (b. 1906), Manohar Malgonhar (b. 1913), Attia Hossein (b. 1913), Kushwant Singh (b. 1915), Kamala Markandaya (b. 1924), Nayantara Sahgal (b. 1927) and Anita Desai (b. 1937) . This analysis is thus mainly concerned with post-Independence Indo-Anglian writing of the fifties to the seventies for it is this period that is the setting for Jhabvala's novels, and it is with most of the writers mentioned above that she is often discussed.[8]

For a writer who has now left India for fifteen years and whose work takes only backward glances at an India that seems to be increasingly distant and abstract, it may seem inappropriate to discuss Jhabvala's work within the Indo-Anglian context. Yet it is the portrayal of India in the eight novels and many short stories that drew interest and approval from critics in the West and India, contributing in general to the growth of critical enquiry into Indo-Anglian literature. More importantly Jhabvala's Indian fiction has established her standing as a writer in the

Western world. A Western readership sees Jhabvala as the 'initiated-outsider' (Updike 1976: 83), the European well-equipped to write about Indians with the advantage of a European's ironic objectivity. It is within the advantages and limitations imposed by this consideration that Jhabvala's writing is briefly studied with that of the Indo-Anglian writers. She shares many of the concerns of Indo-Anglian writing, particularly a thematic preoccupation with East-West relations, the portrayal of the modern, Indian woman, and India's modernization. There are however vital differences. These arise mainly from her alien consciousness, her lack of the Indian writers' concern with projecting an "Indian consciousness" and her more critical portrayal of Indian society. It is these opposed qualities of Jhabvala's writing - to write with authenticity and zest of Indian life and on the other hand to view it with irony - that has maintained the interest and popularity of her Indian novels particularly for a Western readership. It also justifies a brief analysis of her work within the Indo-Anglian context.

As Indo-Anglian writer Jhabvala seems to have elicited almost extreme responses. She is either placed together with some of the 'greats' of the Indo-Anglian tradition, R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai, or criticized for faults associated with being an 'outsider'.(9) Many Indians, preferring literature written in the various native languages of the continent for example Bengali, Kannada or Tamil, tend to regard Indo-Anglian writers as Westernized, unreliable interpreters of Indian society. They are seen as motivated only by commercial interests and presenting the Western reader with his expectations of the Indian world. Jhabvala is doubly disadvantaged; not only is her portrayal of India considered suspect for she is a foreigner, she is not even a lapsed Indian trying to belong again by building up confidence, national consciousness and pride through her writing. Most of the criticism levelled against her revolves round the validity of the picture she paints

of contemporary India, specifically of Delhi. Her observations of Delhi especially of Westernized Indians, the *babus*, are seen as 'trite and superficial' and her characters just another lot of 'ethnic curiosities' (de Souza 1978: 222). After commenting on what she sees as Jhabvala's total lack of appreciation for the country and any 'sociological perspective and insight', de Souza concludes that Jhabvala's writing is merely 'fodder' for foreigners and their preconceived notions of modern India as a country of hypocritical Westernized elite, rich socialites, phoney intellectuals and corrupt politicians (de Souza 1978: 224).

Shyam Asnani, who bemoans the lack of critical attention for Jhabvala's work and writes of her 'uncommon insight into the typical traits of Indians', nevertheless is concerned to list what he feels are details of Indian life so easily misrepresented by even initiated foreigners (Asnani 1974: 38-47). What is seen by some critics as a sharply-observed cogent picture of modern India with the social and cultural effects of modernity subtly exposed, is seen by others (particularly Indian critics) as 'the constant sneering' of a resident Westerner who finds nothing to like in India (Vasant Shahane quoted in Blackwell 1985: 47). The Indian-ness Jhabvala portrays, for example the nuances of rhythm and tone of Indian speech-patterns rendered in English, the family gatherings and the preoccupation with food, is seen as part of the Western writer's treatment of India as 'an anthropological showpiece (Chetan Karnani quoted in Gooneratne 1983(b): 74). Jhabvala's response to accusations of her 'anti-Indian' attitudes is:

> If you don't say that India is simply paradise on earth, and the extended Hindu family the most perfect way of organizing society, you're anti-Indian.
>
> (May 1975: 57)

V.S. Naipaul's opinion of Jhabvala's work contrasts with the judgements above. He sees Jhabvala as the only writer who 'while working

from within the society' is 'yet able to impose on it a vision which is an acceptable type of comment' (Naipaul 1964: 228).[10] Jhabvala's 'vision' of India is made up of her outsider status and her ironic viewpoint. Iyengar observes that she looks at life in modern Delhi with 'amused, yet detached interest'; focussing on the bizarre, the ludicrous, the contradictory and 'what is perilously close to tragedy' (Iyengar 1973: 452). Jhabvala brought with her to India and to her fiction the modern Europeans' view of human nature as flawed and ironic, one that grew out of the experience of Hitler's Germany, a world war, and the Holocaust. Her targets are not exclusively Indian faults but human frailties that have been exposed by ironic scrutiny from Chaucer to Naipaul. For both Westerners and Indians in her Indian fiction or her later novels set in America, Jhabvala exposes irony's standard targets: self-interest and vanity, hypocrisy and self-delusion, aspects of human nature that bring about exploitation and abuse.

East-West relations is one of the most important subjects of Indo-Anglian writing (Derrett 1966). Directly or indirectly it is the thematic setting for many Indo-Anglian novels. Its main feature is the supremacy of the Indian way of life over the Western; India's cultural refinement and the potential it offers for the Indians' spiritual development is pitted against the economic blackmail and materialism of the West. Kamala Markandaya's Possession (1963) studies the clash between Indian spirituality and Western materialism. Young Valmiki, the village outcast, under the guidance of the ascetic Swamy, is inspired to paint pictures of gods and goddesses on cave walls. He is brought by Lady Caroline Bell, a 'rich, divorced well-born' Englishwoman to England. Her patronage of his talent and life in the West brings about changes in 'Val'. Pride, sexual laxity, materialism and self-interest threaten to 'choke' and destroy him completely until back in India he regains the guidance of Swamy. The novel ends ambivalently with the clash of wills between Swamy

and Caroline. Although Valmiki's experiences in England have matured him it is only with Swamy's guidance that his artistic talent and spiritual awareness can flourish. Lady Caroline's threat 'I shall take care to make him want me ...' remains real, and vigilance and strength are required on Valmiki's part. The theme and setting of Train to Pakistan (1956) by Khuswant Singh is that of the communal Muslim-Sikh-Hindu fighting during the Partition unrest of 1947. The tragedy of the struggle is presented against the individual cases of faith, heroism and love and the larger perspective of the Partition bloodshed as being the result of a hundred years of British administrative mismanagement and disregard of the peoples' interests. In Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope (1960) India maintains her identity even after years of domination by the West in the protagonist Rama's kinship with India and the strengthening of ancient moorings after the years spent in France, marriage to a French woman and the death of their daughter.

Unhampered by national pride or political motives, Jhabvala has no need to project an image of India that is good and superior. Her portrayal of Indian life avoids the pitfalls for writers motivated by nationalistic motives: an over-emphasis of the message and characters that are too neatly differentiated.(11) Jhabvala's treatment of the East-West theme ranges from acid portrayals of modern Indians who ape the West, like Amrit in Esmond in India who apologizes for using his fingers to eat (E1: 44), to stories of apparently Westernized liberal-minded young women (Nimmi in The Nature of Passion, Shakuntala in Esmond in India) at temporary odds with their families, to that of troubled and unsuccessful East-West marriages and relationships as in Esmond in India, A Backward Place and short stories like 'The Aliens' (LBLF: 79-100), 'Passion' (ASC: 65-86) and 'In Love with a Beautiful Girl' (ASC: 11-32). In Esmond in India Gulab and Esmond go their separate ways because of their complete incompatibility: Jhabvala elicits our understanding and sympathy for both

characters only to neutralise it by highlighting Gulab's sluggishness and indulgence and Esmond's self-seeking and vanity as the intellectual, artistic Englishman in affluent Delhi. The ironic detachment with which Jhabvala portrays the protagonists' weaknesses and their deep unhappiness, the ambivalent ending in which is implied a continuance of deceptions and self-seeking, contrast with the stylistic character delineation of Possession. Swamy is the true Hindu ascetic unobtrusive, teasing and gentle, wisely allowing the young boy to make his own decision about leaving for England. When he next meets Val in London, no effort is made to persuade the boy to return for Val has to learn that 'The world offers its fruits in plenty, but they come in halves, the bitter and the sweet' (Markandaya 1967: 30). To the end Lady Caroline remains the aggressive, possessive Westerner who has invested her money and social credibility in 'creating' Val. In An Inner Fury (1955) Mira's rejection of her English lover is a symbolic rejection of the West and a turning to India for inspiration. Even Mulk Raj Anand, whose Untouchable (1933) is a highly-acclaimed sharply ironic study of poverty and caste is often guilty of allowing his moral convictions to dominate and become separate from the story line. This happens in the three stories that recount the adventures of a poor boy Lal Singh: The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942). Singh leaves his village but comes back to India much later after disillusionment with the ravages of the First World War and Western materialism.

In Jhabvala's later Indian novels the irony is sharper and the stereotyping of characters perhaps more pronounced. Westerners are exploited by handsome young men, seekers by bogus *gurus* and the famed Indian spirituality is dispassionately exposed as fronts for power, sex and financial exploitation. Even so, Jhabvala's even-handed ironic viewpoint shows the delusions of the Westerners themselves. Her irony

highlights the women's wilful blindness to danger-signs and their inability for self-analysis.

The subject of isolation and alienation, an aspect in many cases of East-West relations provides much Indo-Anglian literature with varieties of the displaced Westernized Indian who is at odds with family, community and country. In some cases the 'outsider' role leads to tragedy, as with Kit (Kitsamy) in Markandaya's An Inner Fury and Krishnan in The Dark Dancer (1959) by Bhalchandra Rajan. In many cases however disillusionment and conflict are resolved as, by instinct or intuition these characters are gathered into the fold of family or community life with a renewed sense of belonging and pride in India. The Indian character is shown to be continually adjusting personal will and inclinations to the demands of family caste and community groups and this Indo-Anglian preoccupation to show the integration of displaced young Indians is also seen in Jhabvala's early works. For characters who are intelligent, upright caring individuals and therefore sensitive to what they see as India's drawbacks, Jhabvala allows them insight into the harmony, beauty and unifying influence of India.

In To Whom She Will, Krishna Sen Gupta, the Bengali intellectual, is distressed and angered by the poverty of his people and the submissiveness of Indian women. He feels a gradual sense of peace and belonging with his love for an Indian girl and a renewed, instinctive appreciation for Indian music. Sudhir in A Backward Place is discontented with his life, the empty pretensions of Delhi society and bitterly disillusioned over India's post-Independence progress. He leaves his job as Secretary of the pretentious Cultural Dais to teach at a new school in a remote district of Madya Pradesh. On the train there is an epiphany-like realization of his sense of belonging and duty in the glorious muddle of modern India:

> But it seemed to him now, shut in with an assortment of strangers and travelling through a landscape which was too dark to be seen and could therefore be only guessed at, that perhaps the paradox was not a paradox after all or, if it was, was one that pleasurably resolved itself for the sake of him who accepted it and rejoiced in it and gave himself over to it, the way a lover might.
>
> (BP: 184-185)

Sid Harrex in his contribution to Contemporary Novelists considers it appropriate to place Jhabvala in the context of contemporary literature in the Indo-Anglian tradition because her subject is Indian life ... that of middle-class urban India and of Europeans living in India (Harrex 1972: 679). Jhabvala's descriptions of Delhi scenes and Delhi life like those of Anita Desai and Sashi Deshpande, create a world 'concretely culture-specific' (Mukherjee 1983: 70). Attention to details of environment and atmosphere and descriptions of the many faces of India add texture and depth to the setting, becoming more than mere travelogue-like accounts for a Western readership. Jhabvala is particularly interested in descriptions of houses and buildings. There is Lakshmi's tenement home in the poor section of Delhi in Esmond in India where the walls are spattered with betel-juice and neighbours can look down the central courtyard to spy on all her domestic chores. In The Householder and Get Ready for Battle there are descriptions of poorly-built government housing for the lower grade clerks: isolated rows of houses with bad plumbing and inadequate electrical fixtures. There are also the homes of the Delhi elite with air-conditioned rooms cool as the smell of ice-cream (TWW: 25) where meetings for the uplift of the deprived are held in an atmosphere of silk saris, Limoges china and the smell of bodies 'perfumed and powdered and eau-de-cologned' (TWW: 126).

Jhabvala's characters are as 'Indian' as those created by R.K. Narayan. Both make us trust their characters, we believe in the idealism and goodwill of Narayan's characters as we do the worldliness and spirituality of Jhabvala's. They are individualized in terms of their

cultural environment yet they avoid being merely representative figures that Indo-Anglian writing often creates in its preoccupation with pan-Indian nationalistic themes and inter-cultural subjects. In The Nature of Passion, Lalaji and Dev Raj are two fully-realized portrayals of Punjabi businessmen in Delhi. Although Dev Raj is a secondary character Lalaji's thoughts about his friend (and business-rival), the conversations they engage in serve to project their mutual respect for one anothers business acumen, their realistic approach to problems. Equally important Jhabvala emphasizes their Indianness in their observance of traditional niceties of social norms, in their fierce pride in family honour and in their conviction of how much family honour depends on money, material success, sound marriage arrangements and extremely lavish weddings.

If these are all signs of 'a set of Indian identifications' Jhabvala shows in relation to India, there is also the other side to her unique dual point of view, the 'immigrant awareness' of the foreigner. The 'initiated outsider' sees the reality behind the surface; the colour and zest of Indian life and Indian manners is usually undercut by irony. Amidst the affluence, reconciliations of domestic difference, family togetherness and feasting, Jhabvala introduces, unobtrusively in the earlier novels, more frequently in the later ones, images of another and less happy India: poor peasants, backward rural life, slum dwellers, beggars, the aged and destitute. Then there are darker ironic counterpoints in the way Jhabvala suggests the continuance of exploitation, self-seeking and indifference of her protagonists. Lalaji in the Nature of Passion is an excellent businessman, a doting family head, a good friend and leader in the Punjabi community. Yet his love for money taints all his actions and all those associated with him for like some disease, his gross materialism infects his children.

Jhabvala has often been compared to R.K. Narayan for their ironic wit at exposing Indian manners; the brief discussion that follows of the

Univers
Librar
Hull

two Indo-Anglian writers will however focus on differences which emphasize their positions as initiated outsider and native writer respectively. Their treatment of the setting of their stories reveals the difference in attitudes towards Indians. R.K. Narayan's created town of Malgudi which is the setting for all his fiction is as permanent and resilient to change as his native Mysore or India. Jhabvala's Delhi on the other hand, gradually loses the life and distinctness of the early novels; in A New Dominion the Indianness becomes less important than the depiction of Delhi as the setting of various sexual relationships. For Lee, Margaret, Raymond and Gopi it is one of many places on their long journey to seek fulfilment. In Three Continents, Delhi is synonymous with a hotel undergoing renovation, its air conditioning keeping the heat and dust and glare outside at bay.

R.K. Narayan is stylistically more adventurous than Jhabvala, combining realism with elements of fantasy as in Mr. Sampath (1949) and The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961). Despite this, integration is the subject of his fiction and in a Narayan novel, the pattern is that of a character departing from his normal life, and then returning to it at the end (William 1972: 1150). Jhabvala is more tied to realism and her ironic preoccupation with the subjects of displacement and isolation do not readily allow for integration and final harmonies.

For both writers, India is both modern and ancient - Narayan's Indian has not changed much, human nature stays as it is and customs and traditions nurture and nourish. Thus Malgudi, despite conflict and upheaval from the outside world, survives. Jhabvala's India is a place of irreconcilable conflicts between modern and ancient, a place where traditional values and ideals survive in severely truncated forms.[12] Basically, the differences in ironic tones and thematic preoccupations, derive from their differences in status. Narayan's perspective is essentially benign, positive and confident; his irony is that of the

indulgent elder looking on at the weaknesses of fellow Indians. Jhabvala's perspective is the darkening ironic view of the rootless European who discovers 'immersion' means greater disillusionment.

In her study of aspects of Indo-Anglian fiction (1971), Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that many novels in this tradition show the use of myth, folktale, archetypes and ritual either as structural parallels or as digressions. Jhabvala shares in this Indo-Anglian concern to show the continued influence of the traditional in Indian life and the living relationship between the modern and the traditional in contemporary society. Each of her Indian novels operates on a specific traditional or religious concept, the particular ideals of the concept becoming a kind of reference point by which we understand the actions and dilemmas of her protagonists.(13) Archetypal relationships like the Radha-Krishna divine love, the fight of good against evil in the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are popular bases for many Indo-Anglian plots and characterizations. Certainly there are many women protagonists portrayed as parallels of Sita in their submissiveness, of Shakti in their powerful protectiveness or of Draupadi in their aggressive rebelliousness.

Two other examples deserve mention. R.K. Narayan's The Man-Eater of Malgudi, a warning to the mighty that they will bring about their own destruction, is a new rendering of the Bhasmasura myth.(14) In this myth, a demon, given a boon by Siva, inevitably, through pride and intoxication of his powers, destroys himself. In Raja Rao's Kanthapura an old woman Achakka captures the mystic nature of her tale in the incantatory power of her words. An imaginative account of Gandhi's impact on a South Indian village Kanthapura is seen in terms of the archetypal struggle of good against evil. Gandhi is a God, Moorthy the protagonist, an *avatar* of Rama, the white men are the devils (*asuras*), the Gandhi followers, the *satyagrahis*, are the angels (*devas*) and the other characters are symbols of good or evil.

The idea of renunciation, seen by Mukherjee as one of the main religious themes in Indo-Anglian writing (Mukherjee 1971: 99-131) has resulted in the portrayal of spiritual seekers, characters she refers to as 'jivanmukti'. These are believers who are liberated through giving up desire and renouncing the world. In Kanthapura, there is Moorthy, in The Cat and Shakespeare (1965), Raja Rao creates Govindan Nair. R.K. Narayan's The Guide (1959) is the story of Raju, a drifter and former convict who is taken for a *sadhu*, a holy man. Gradually in word and deed Raju lives up to the villagers' expectations; the novel ends with him at the end of a twelve day fast and penance undertaken to end the drought in the village. In Santha Rama Rau's Remember the House (1956) the mother gives up her worldly comforts to live as a recluse in Kerala with her guru. In Jhabvala's fiction too there are a number of devout, spiritually-aware, or fulfilled seekers. All are subject to varying degrees of ironic counterpoint. The least ironically viewed is Bhuaji, the old aunt in A Backward Place who inspires the Westerner Judy to be accepting and trusting in God's will for the future.

The use of folklore, religious stories, symbols and images has led to creative innovations in the Indo-Anglian novel form. Raja Rao in Kanthapura employs the Puranic digressive way of story telling;[15] Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable uses the fable and folk tale form. The native world view is cleverly depicted in the use of indigenous narrative forms in the language and structuring of such works. Jhabvala's stories follow the usual pattern and development of action of Western novels. In this she is more akin to the later Indo-Anglians, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya and Nayantara Sahgal.

The portrayal of women in Indo-Anglian fiction belongs to the larger context of the thematic concern of the Indo-Anglian novelist with the subject of alienation, 'his persistent delineation of rootless characters' as 'symptomatic of his own uprootedness' (Pathak 1982: 1). The married

Indian woman caught between modernity and tradition, self-fulfilment and family commitments is one of Indo-Anglian fiction's most recurrent themes. The Sita-Savitri ideal overshadowed many of the early Indo-Anglian portrayals of women. They were presented as embodiments of endurance, immune to the cultural impact of the West or any longing for self-expression. Meena Shirwadkar sees the impact of Western culture, education and changes in economic condition as having brought the women out of the Sita shadow (Shirwadkar 1979: xi). In contemporary Indo-Anglian writing this is seen in the greater number of 'rebels', honest women who are aware of their shortcomings, speak out and act against tyranny and opt for freedom and happiness. The recent works of Sashi Deshpande (That Long Silence, 1988) and of Bharati Mukherjee are examples. Yet the Sita figure continues to be important. This time her intelligence, patience and forthrightness are taken as the ideals for the new Indian woman. Individuality, and familial and national expectations, are reconciled. In Music for Mohini (1952) by B. Bhattacharya, Mohini eventually discovers her destiny lies not in the liberal, modern ideas of the city but in tolerance for her mother-in-law and in a combination of old and new.

Anita Desai's darker studies of female alienation are closer to Jhabvala's portrayal of lonely vulnerable women who have no choices or suffer for the choices they make. According to Iyengar, Desai's forte is the exploration of the particular kind of 'modern Indian sensibility that is ill at ease among the barbarians and the philistines, the anarchists and the amoralists' (Iyengar 1973: 464). Where Desai's intensely isolated protagonists turn inwards to greater pain and madness, Jhabvala's women place their faith and future in just such irresponsible 'anarchists' and 'amoralists'. In 'A Bad Woman' (AEI: 21-45) Charmeli the lonely mistress of the rich businessman Sethji destroys herself by falling in love with the unstable, tormented Ravi. In 'On Bail' (HIBAHM: 181-197)

Rajee is imprisoned for 'cheating and impersonation'. The story is told by his (unnamed) wife who is so besotted with him that she borrows money for bail, from one of his ex-lovers on the understanding that Rajee will resume relations with Sudha. Indians or Westerners, these women mirror in differing degrees Jhabvala's own rootlessness and the isolation she experienced with her own vision of India and the translation of that vision in her art.

Anita Desai is the most 'European' of the Indo-Anglian novelists; she is part-German and part-Bengali, and it is highly likely that the similar backgrounds of Anita Desai and Jhabvala have resulted in certain parallels in their work. Both deal with introverted lonely women in relationships with men who are inadequate, indifferent or exploitative. Although Desai is not an ironic writer, the ambivalence and inconclusiveness of the endings of her novels, like Jhabvala's place them somewhat apart from the generally positive conclusions of Indo-Anglian fiction.

As mentioned earlier, Jhabvala acknowledges the dialectic of modernity and tradition depicted in Indo-Anglian fiction by setting up her own traditional framework. The central difference between Jhabvala and the other writers lies in her ironic use of the norms, myths and archetypes. For the Indo-Anglian writers, myths, legends and folk tales are 'value-endowed paradigms' (Kirpal 1988: 151) used to inspire, or to render more meaningful certain aspirations, or certain episodes in Indian history. Jhabvala is more concerned to show the deviations and adaptations to these ideals and myths. In Jhabvala's fiction there is not a single 'Sita' and only one Sita-figure. This is Shanta in <u>The Nature of Passion</u>. Her husband is indifferent to her; her mother-in-law likes her because she is obedient and does not talk back, her sister-in-law is contemptuous of her ignorance and submissive ways. In short, nobody recognizes the worth of a Sita in modern-day Delhi.

Vasant Shahane, an Indian critic observes:

> The use of archetypes in character portrayal or central concept of the novel by Indian writers in England has been rather half-hearted, and even qualitatively indifferent. Naming women characters as 'Sita' or 'Rama' [sic] is merely a nominal adherence to the archetypal myth. The myth itself has not been worked out in the texture of the novel, much less can it be considered its soul or energising spirit.
>
> (Shahane 1974: 34)

Of the Indo-Anglian writers it is Jhabvala who consistently uses a traditional and religious framework. It is neither a 'half-hearted' nor 'indifferent' use, for in each of her eight novels there is a central reference point, of a traditional norm, a religious concept or an ideal worked into the texture of each work, serving to develop her themes, plots, characterizations and most important of all, her irony.

It may appear ironic that it is an outsider who makes the attempt to work out consistently and successfully, religious and traditional norms into the texture of her Indian novels. Yet it is the initiated-outsider's dual viewpoint that allows her to see firstly an India subject to change and modernity, yet suffused with the spirit and traditions of the past. Secondly it allows her to see the degree of adaptation and attrition worked on these norms, myths and ideals. As outsider and with no political axes to grind, Jhabvala avoids the tendency to accord a homogeneity to India and its people. She sees and records the heterogeneous reality of India: Delhi subject to the cross-currents of tensions between communities, social groups, caste divisions. It is Jhabvala's consistent use of traditional and religious elements and the relationship of this to her ironic view of Indian life that makes her a special writer not only in the Indo-Anglian context but also that of the Anglo-Indian.

iii) Ruth Prawer Jhabvala Within The Anglo-Indian Tradition

The term Anglo-Indian was used to designate the British community in India during the Raj (Parry 1972: vii). Anglo-Indian or British literature about India consisted of reminiscences, commentaries and fiction on Anglo-Indian life, that is of the British experience in India from the age of Imperial confidence to the setting in of disenchantment in the 1920s (Parry 1972: 4).[16] For this study the term Anglo-Indian writing refers to fiction about India, the Westerners' experience of India and East-West relations as seen from the Western perspective of a non-Indian writer. It includes fiction of the Raj days, as well as that of post-Independence and contemporary India.[17] These English works are united in their central concern with India either as exotic experience in its own right, or as a metaphor for human experience. Anglo-Indian writers E.M. Forster (1879-1970), Paul Scott (1920-78), Rumer Godden (1907-1973) and M.M. Kaye (1911-1985) and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, though far removed from each other in time and experience share a common concern to register the Western perspective on India and on East-West relations in the Indian context.

When it was first published, A Passage to India (1924) attracted a great deal of attention not just for its literary merit but because of the portrayal of Anglo-Indians and Indians. In his account of the bigotry and arrogance of the Anglo-Indians, Forster struck at the heart of the failure of British-Indian relations. His characterization of the passionate, volatile young Muslim doctor, Aziz, created an Indian individual in his own right. He was not the token Indian character, utilitarian or exotic, on the periphery of the action of much of Anglo-Indian fiction of the time (Islam 1979: 5; Parry 1972: 98).

Forster's novel mirrored the growing ambivalence of attitude towards the British presence in India with the First World War and the waning of the Imperial idea. A Passage to India exposed the prejudice and conflict

behind the colour, confidence and self-righteousness of Kipling's fiction and the Anglo-Indian romances. It became a touchstone for subsequent Anglo-Indian novels, looking ahead to a time when Indians would be able to know the rulers as equals. In Jhabvala's last two Indian novels, A New Dominion and Heat and Dust, there are Forsterian echoes, almost as if Jhabvala in self-directed irony, sees her final portrayal of India as an interpretation of the nature of that equality of status in modern India which Forster's novel hoped for.

Forster believed in the importance of love and imagination in human affairs. In A Passage to India no one is able to sustain an enduring balance between emotion and reason but characters like Mrs. Moore, Fielding and Professor Godbole come closest. The ambivalence that the novel presents, in the possibility of love and equality between English and Indians, and, on the other hand, the dissonance of its conclusion when Aziz rejects Fielding's friendship and even nature itself seems to indicate its support, is related to the personal facts of Forster's life and convictions.

As a liberal humanist Forster was inspired by his friendship with his employer The Maharaja of Dewas Senior. It was a relationship of mutual respect, admiration and love and convinced Forster more than ever of the need and possibility of sympathy between human beings. Yet Anglo-Indian snobbery, privilege and status threatened that harmony. Also important is the fact that the Aziz-Fielding relationship is a simultaneous expression of Forster's faith in the beauty and power of Platonic male relationships and his inability to express his homosexuality publicly. India, the conflict between Raj and native and the impossibility of English-Indian friendships became surrogates for Forster's own protest against the obstructions to self-growth, individuality and love, and the shadow of public and legal disgrace of sexual eccentricity. Forster began the tradition of using Indian life as

an image of personal experiences (Walsh 1983: 258). Jhabvala's Indian fiction is also the product of intensely personal attitudes and feelings and Forster's novel affords a valuable reference point not only for Jhabvala herself but also for a study of her portrayal of East-West relations.

Paul Scott's Raj Quartet is made up of The Jewel in the Crown (1966); The Day of the Scorpion (1968); The Towers of Silence (1971) and A Division of the Spoils (1975). They are densely historical recreations of British rule in the critical years of 1942-1947, a period of Indian nationalistic fervour and heightened resentment against the British. The sexual threat posed by Indians to Anglo-Indian society, a metaphor for the fear and sterility of British rule in India, is seen in the imagined attack in A Passage to India.(18) Scott develops this in the Bibighar affair in which Daphne Manners is raped by a gang of Indians who have seen her make love to an Indian, Hari Kumar. The fragile nature of English-Indian relations is imaged in the hopelessness of the Daphne-Hari love as they become victims of both the Indian rapists and the British administrators who make of the Bibighar a political matter and a vindication of their suspicions of Indian lasciviousness. In the character of the violent, sado-masochistic Colonel Merrick, who hates Indians but makes use of Indian boys, the ideal of connectedness becomes a bitter myth and Scott rewrites Forster.

In Scott's novels the British define themselves against their political duties in India. In Jhabvala's novels, the English and other Westerners are various types of failed lovers and pseudo-spiritualists looking for fulfilment, seekers who come to India not to conquer but to be conquered. Scott's work presents India as a lost Paradise, a place where British ideals are not realized. It provides interesting comparison to Jhabvala's stories of hopeless quests of idealistic, introverted

Westerners looking for meaning against played-out Western materialism and being exploited by charismatic, voracious Indians.

Scott's last novel Staying On (1977) focuses on Colonel Tusker and Lucy Smalley, minor but memorable characters in the Raj Quartet. They decide to stay on in Pankot after Independence and the story is about the meaning of 'staying on' when 'the place in which they have stayed has declined to stay with them' (Swinden 1980: 104). Scott portrays the new class structures of the India of the sixties and seventies, of dispossessed Indians and old, undistinguished Raj leftovers at the mercy of international commerce, and the new Indian entrepreneurial class. Here again Scott's writing provides excellent comparison to Jhabvala's portrayal of the crass commercialism of contemporary Indian life.

Rumer Godden's Indian fiction like Jhabvala's, is the product of a long residence. These include Black Narcissus (1939), The River (1946), Kingfishers Catch Fire (1955) and Two Under the Indian Sun (1966).[19] There are other similarities with Jhabvala: Godden's stories centre round female protagonists, domestic issues and Westerners adapting to living in India. These features and Godden's (and her protagonists) abiding love for India are useful bases for examining Jhabvala's writing in relation to a distinguished woman writer of the Anglo-Indian tradition.

M.M. Kaye's fiction is a reworking of the themes and characters of the nineteenth century Anglo-Indian romance novelettes. In these stories, India is an exotic backdrop to tales of love and improbable adventures. The emphases on Indian sensuality, religious fanaticism and inscrutability emphasized Anglo-Indian mental health, spiritual cleanliness and sense of duty. Kaye's Shadow of the Moon (1957) and The Far Pavilions (1978) are modern adaptations of the imperial theme of Anglo-Indian literature. Far Pavilions is a historical romance that traces the military adventure of Ashton Pelham (initially brought up as an Indian, Ashok) in the Afghan Wars in the second half of the nineteenth century, and his love for the

half-Indian princess Juli. It is dedicated to 'all the officers and men of different races and creeds' who served in The Corps of Guides, and a tribute to M.M. Kaye's soldier husband and his illustrious relatives. Kaye writes with the advantage of being able to look back at the glorious British presence in India with greater objectivity and sophistication than her earlier counterparts. Of the four writers Kaye is the most different from Jhabvala in her portrayal of the experience of India and thematic concerns. Yet her exotic image of India has a certain ironic parallel to Jhabvala's image of India in her later darker novels of hopeless quests. On the whole however, Jhabvala's consistently satirical-ironic viewpoint of Westerners in India and of life there affords contrast to Kaye's story-telling of brave dedicated young soldier-administrators, half-breed princesses, rescues from death by suttee or other 'depraved' Indian practices and the reconciliation of lovers torn apart by duty and patriotism.

Forster believed that modern civilization repressed the instincts and imagination, placing taboos on experiences which transcend so-called norms of society (Parry 1972: 264). He felt Indian society allowed the communication between passion and intellect besides accommodating in a person's life his yearning for the sacred. Forster's India refines and harmonizes those on the fringe of Anglo-Indian *pukka* life: for Adela and Mrs. Moore who are questers, the journey to India is a journey to self-knowledge; for Fielding it is the brief, harmonious friendship with an Indian when he listens to his heart and aligns himself with the Indians against the Anglo-Indian world. With their officialdom, racial and herd instincts Anglo-Indians are arrogant rulers incapable of accommodation and blind to the spiritual possibilities of friendship and love.

Forster's use of the Marabar hills and its caves as the place where the alleged outrage occurs is on one level an acknowledgement of the Indo-Anglian tendency to associate the continent of India with all that is

ugly, debilitating, inscrutable and potentially dangerous (Islam 1979: 19). The hills are not attractive: 'They rise abruptly, insanely, without the proportion that is kept by the wildest hills elsewhere, they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen' (Forster 1936: 123). Forster's description of the caves is abstract and symbolic suggesting their antiquity: they are dark, very little light penetrates, a struck match only heightens the mystery of 'these chambers never unsealed since the arrival of the gods' (Forster 1936: 124). For Mrs. Moore the echoes in the caves offer a dark message:

> Pathos, piety, courage - they exist, but are identical, so is filth ... Everything exists, nothing has value
>
> (Forster 1936: 147)

Gradually however, the experience of the caves provides revelations for those open to India's influence. Fielding becomes a friend, Adela acquires self-knowledge and Mrs. Moore in a mystical experience learns the Marabar caves are 'not final' but one of the many faces of mysterious India (Forster 1936: 204).

Despite Aziz's rejection of Fielding's friendship and the comic muddle and confusion at the Gokal Ashtami Festival in the final section 'Temple', the main effect of the novel is that of an order in the universe that is glimpsed, even if not seized (Brown 1966: 159). Forster posts signs of this order: Mrs. Moore feels a kinship with the heavenly bodies in the Mosque when she is there with Aziz; a strong and enduring link is forged between the two, to continue in the latter's instinctive feeling for Mrs. Moore's children, Ralph and Stella; at the trial, after confusion and despair, Adela Quested has a moment of illumination and acknowledges Aziz's innocence; and finally, at the Ashtami celebration, Godbole achieves transcendence by impelling thoughts of Mrs. Moore and a wasp.

Forster's A Passage to India presented an India far removed from the Anglo-Indian idea of a country in which the codes and habits of its people

were aberrations and vestiges of a dark past which threatened British rationality and order. In an incomprehensible, contradictory universe, Forster found in India's religions and way of life the possibility of unity and transcendence. In his book an arbitrary, discordant India is balanced with revelations of beauty and concord. The *punkawallah* in the court-room in A Passage to India is of low birth, nourished on the city's garbage; yet he is notable, has 'strength and beauty', and 'stood out as divine' seeming 'apart from human destinies', a winnower of souls' (Forster 1936: 212). Forster's vision of India's uniqueness, timelessness and spirituality is captured in the mysterious and equivocal atmosphere of his description of Mrs. Moore and the wasp:

> Going to hang up her cloak, she found that the tip of the peg was occupied by a small wasp ....Perhaps he mistook the peg for a branch - no Indian animal has any sense of an interior. Bats, rats, birds, insects will as soon nest inside a house as out; it is to them a normal growth of the external jungle, which alternately produces trees, houses, trees. There he clung asleep, while jackals in the plain bayed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums.
> 'Pretty dear,' said Mrs. Moore to the wasp. He did not wake, but her voice floated out, to swell the night's uneasiness.
>
> (Forster 1936: 35)

Forster's India, old, spiritual, misunderstood and unappreciated, taking within it contradiction as does Hinduism, is in marked contrast to Scott's India, the India of pre-Independence politics. Whilst Forster largely ignores topical political issues in his novel, Scott's works rest firmly and irrevocably on the political actions and repercussions of the British presence in India. The Quit India Act, 1942 (passed by the Indian Congress after Britain declared India's participation on the side of the Allies at the outbreak of World War II), the subsequent riots, British fighting in Burma and the imprisonment of Indian National Congress members are some of the historical events that feature in the Raj Quartet.

Scott's India is a place where the most intricate colonial politics takes place, between the rulers and the ruled but especially between the

Anglo-Indians themselves. Scott brings to India 'the fractured and fractious personality of the Westerner' (Walsh 1983: 259). India is a metaphor for life; he shows it as a lost Paradise where the British in failing to rule justly and judiciously have abandoned their ideals, duties and their very identities. Patrick Swinden writes of Scott's concern to show the despair of his protagonists in their awareness of the illusory world they have created. Edwina Crane, the despairing missionary, feels that because of 'this little matter of colour of the skin', the English had failed in their duty 'to make of their time in India, something sane and grave, full of dignity, full of thoughtfulness and kindness and peace and wisdom' (Scott 1976: 61).

India in Scott's novels is British India, not so much a place, idea and presence as with Forster, but 'the action, the people' as the narrator states at the beginning of The Jewel in the Crown. Sexual images and episodes epitomise the British presence in India and these ironically continue a tradition of early Anglo-Indian fiction - the notion of the violence and savagery of the Indians and the allure and threat India posed for Anglo-Indian power and order. In Hari's supposed rape of Daphne (as with Adela's accusation of Aziz), Scott uses the familiar stereotype of the unstable, violent, promiscuous native to emphasize the actual events. The rape is an allegorical representation of the British rape of India. Daphne, writes to her aunt Lady Manners, 'of the whole bloody affair of us in India' as 'based on a violation' (Scott 1976: 400). The British idea of justice is compared to a 'blundering judicial robot' that cannot distinguish between love and rape and only 'understands physical connection ... as a crime because it only exists to punish crime (Scott 1976: 425).

In Superintendent of Police Merrick, Anglo-India is no less violent and sadistic than the image it has created of India. The legacy of violence perpetrated by robots like Merrick is seen in the opening

incident of A Jewel in the Crown and the close of A Division of the Spoils. At the beginning of the first book, a dead Indian lies on the road a victim of mutual Indian-British prejudice and fear. In the last novel, Muslim victims on a train journey from Mirat to Ranpur lie slaughtered by Sikhs and Hindus.

Rumer Godden's India is far removed from Scott's politically analytic studies of Anglo-Indian ennui and disillusionment. Both Godden and Forster seem to see India as their chief character, protagonist and sometimes as antagonist. Godden's interpretation of India is highly sympathetic: although she employs the Anglo-Indian staple of India distorting the personalities of Westerners, she off-sets this by emphasising the beneficial effects and illumination brought about by the protagonists' near-fatal contacts with India. In the intimations of transcendence India offers, Godden has affinities with Forster's vision of India. Godden's India is vibrant or serene, breathtaking, mystical, ever ready to bind and hold those who are willing. In Black Narsissus the setting is Mopu among the mountain foothills near Darjeeling; in Kingfishers Catch Fire it is Kashmir; in the semi-autobiographical The River and Two Under the Indian Sun; the setting is Bengal and Kashmir. In these stories, the beauty of the natural landscape and the natives, colourful and decorative, hardy and poor, have the power to captivate and educate.

For sympathetic protagonists, mainly women, India is a place of new sights and wonders. For those less open to experience, held in too tightly by norms they have lived with for too long, physical discomforts can have adverse effects:

> Europeans in India are like cut flowers, that is why most of them wither and grow sterile, they cannot live without their roots, and so few of them take root.
>
> (Godden 1965: 13)

Thus in Black Narcissus the nuns eventually leave Mopu because some of them are unable to cope with its vibrant beauty. Yet the experience in Mopu has also brought the sisters together, chastened the proud and educated the intolerant. India's redeeming influence is also seen in Kingfishers Catch Fire. At the beginning of the story, Sophie acknowledges her love and respect for the Kashmir natives despite the year of misunderstandings and troubles she has experienced. Like the nuns of Mopu she realizes the need to live up to India:

> You have to be fit to qualify ... to live in lonely places ... to be with lonely people.
>
> (Godden 1963: 28)

Godden's protagonists are ordinary men and women whose relationship with India is personal, non-political and non-historical. Forged since childhood, Godden's image of India is not the Anglo-Indian stereotype of a dark amorphous land of wicked Indians. Rather it is a land different, exotic, with a culture, and spirituality the Westerners can learn and benefit from.

David Rubin describes Kaye's fiction as 'a nostalgic retrospect of an India that never was' (Rubin 1986: 1). With the advantage of being able to look back at the events and Anglo-Indian romance novelettes, Kaye shows more sympathy for Indians, and protagonists show tolerance and love for them. The lovers of The Far Pavilions, Ashton and Juli, and Winter de Ballesteros and the soldier Randall in The Shadow of the Moon have deep love for India.

Of all the four writers Kaye's India is the most distanced from its writer. It is the exotic setting for Anglo-Indians in love. It is neither Godden's mystical place of redeeming qualities, nor is it that of Foster's spiritualizing, harmonious presence. It is not Scott's complex troubled Anglo-India of the Quit India unrest, but India of the Imperial days made all the more distant and unreal with its concessions to the

stories' love interest and formulaic components of Anglo-Indian romances. India is the backdrop against which the British, especially the soldiers carry out their duties honourably. India as a colony of the Empire is very much emphasized. Local policies and actions have their basis in events, personalities and attitudes at home. Kaye is not interested in projecting an image of India, she is more interested in showing Anglo-Indians rising honourably to obey or do the best they can with the Acts, Resolutions, Reforms, Council meetings, legislative changes and policies from London or Calcutta.

Jhabvala's work in general and her image of India in particular are derived from her literary background, her conception of her identity as the permanent, rootless exile, and the nature and length of her stay in India, ten years of 'immersion' and another fifteen years of an uneasy survival, alternating between attachment and admiration and disillusionment.

Her stories do record a faith in the redeeming, uplifting power of India. This is seen particularly in A Backward Place and Heat and Dust but is more aligned to Forster's ambivalent optimism rather than that of Godden's. Godden's novels are evocations of the wonders of India, proof of the happy childhood memories and the early absorption with India where her father served as an officer in the jute works. She was to return later, with her family to her beloved Kashmir. Godden's protagonists speak with love and mystification of India. Sophie in Kingfishers Catch Fire and Harriet in The River have insightful visions into India; they are constantly intoxicated by her physical beauty. Sophie exults: 'My eyes will never be poor again, having seen Kashmir. I saw such beauty in things and people' (Godden 1955: 2). No character in Jhabvala's novel would say this unless the author intended it to be an ironic revelation of a self-deluded Westerner hoping to convince herself of her absorption with India. The difference of point of view between these two writers may be

seen in Jhabvala's short story the title of which has been slightly adapted from a Rumer and Jon Godden story 'Two More Under the Indian Sun'. The subject of Jhabvala's story parallels that of the sisters: the deep, committed love of Westerners for India. Two Englishwomen, Margaret and Elizabeth, are drawn together by their love for India. There is however ironic undercutting in the fact that for both women it is a profane human love for Indians that is the basis of their love for India. Margaret has clear memories of her devotion and love for Swami Vishwananda, Elizabeth is very much in love with Raji her husband. The hint of jealousy of the older widowed woman at Elizabeth's preoccupation with her husband completes Jhabvala's ironic version of Two Under the Indian Sun.

Jhabvala's portrayal of the refining power of India is thus never without some counterpoint. Shakuntala in 'The Housewife' and the young wife in 'Lekka' experience spiritual fulfilment through Indian music and dancing. Jhabvala counterpoints this achievement with the fact that this has been achieved at a price - censure and alienation from society - and the possibility even of a sexual rather than a spiritual impetus in their devotion to the art and the teacher. In A Backward Place Judy is inspired by the wide expanse of sky to give in to her husband Bal's plans to start a new life in Bombay. Yet the epiphanic experience is overshadowed by the possibility of divisive family conflict and the reality of an unreliable husband and financial difficulties. Jhabvala's ironic point of view is more closely related to Paul Scott's solemn post-war vision of life and the translation of this in his study of the effects of the British failure to rule morally in Indian.

The other face of India is of a land that saps and debilitates physically and emotionally. Jhabvala's descriptions of the heat and dust, the wide expanse of sky, the filth and poverty are as much for realism and detail of the Indian milieu as they are for ironic foil. In Heat and Dust

the dun-coloured sands and expanse of wind-blown, dusty plains separate the town of Satipur from the Nawab's state. They also symbolize the sterility and boredom of Anglo-Indian life within the Civil Lines for Olivia and contrast with the pearl-grey beauty of the Nawab's palace, and the miraculous vegetation of the Baba Firdaus shrine where Olivia responds to the Nawab's sexual overtures.

No other Anglo-Indian writer has had a longer exposure to India and Indian life than Jhabvala. Her fiction conveys the experiences of people very different from herself. She captures idiosyncrasies of thought, demeanour, speech of young and old, of Indians, Americans, English, Hungarians beside her native German and Jewish protagonists. She shows knowledge of kinship patterns of behaviour, of the nuances of Indian social behaviour that is entirely absent in the other Anglo-Indian writers. In Get Ready for Battle she portrays the formal, restrained relationship between the Indian father and his sons (Mandelbaum 1970: 50), in Vishnu's polite respect for his father's feelings despite the fact that he prefers to start his own business away from his father's shadow.

Yet access to the intricacies of Indian life and the confidence and precision with which Jhabvala portrays its life and manners is not just documentation for its own sake. Inevitably they are part of the strategies Jhabvala employs for comic and ironic emphases. She often uses food and eating habits to divide her characters generally into the traditionalists and the Westernized. In Esmond in India, in the Madhuri-Har Dayal household one Western meal is served daily and the Englishman Esmond enjoys the elegant ambience of afternoon tea with Madhuri for it represents the kind of Delhi life he should enjoy. In his own household, when he is away, his wife Gulab sits on the floor and eats with her fingers the hot, rich spicy food her mother cooks for her, often taking morsels of food out of her mouth and feeding her son Ravi. The macaroni and cheese Gulab eats in front of Esmond is a token gesture of her duty as

wife, just as Esmond's strictures on the right food for Ravi (spinach, carrots, soup) remain unheeded, token orders given by the Englishman for a household he no longer cares about. Food is thus one of the subjects used to highlight, often with comical effect, the more serious, irreconcilable differences of attitude, outlook and background of Esmond's world and that of Gulab's.

Against the large numbers of Jhabvala's characters - larger-than-life comic characters or finely-delineated protagonists often subject to bitter irony - the Indian characters of the other four writers pale somewhat by comparison. Scott's fully-drawn Indians are mostly the Westernized associates of Anglo-Indians, Hari Kumar the lawyer Sreenivasan and the Eurasian Lily Chatterjee; Ibrahim, the servant of the Smalleys in Staying On is however a fully-realized character. Godden's Indians are peripheral and/or exotic, a mix of servants, *ayahs*, clerks, simple, good-hearted villagers, *a saanyasin* under a tree, an Indian prince who uses a perfume called 'Black Narcissus', a seductive widow, and a sensual village girl. Kaye's Indians have identities only in relation to the Anglo-Indians: faithful nurse, foster father, childhood friend, comrades-at-arms, grooms, guards and sepoys. Although Forster's novel has only two main Indian characters, the clearly-delineated Aziz and the comic yet spiritual Godbole, it is with Forster that Jhabvala has the closest links. In her later, dark irony A New Dominion, Gopi the over-sensitive, impressionable young student is a faint, ironic shadow of Dr. Aziz, whilst the ruthless, sensual Swamiji is ironic counterpoint to Forster's loveable mystic.

The Raj Quartet ends on a pessimistic note, looking out to the bloody events of the Partition of 1947. At the end of Scott's last novel, with her husband's death, Lucy Smalley's 'staying on' is fraught with hopelessness. The image of the new India is the brand-new Shiraz Hotel which dominates the Pankot landscape. As negotiations are made by Lucy's

landlady to sell her hotel (and the adjoining Smalley lodge) and buy her way into the consortium that owns the Shiraz, Lucy is Scott's last survivor and last victim of the Raj in India. In modern India she is as much a poor dispossessed figure as her servants, Ibrahim, Minnie and Joseph. In Jhabvala's case the colour and 'clatter' of Indian life is reduced in A New Dominion to an isolated ashram protected by barbed wire where Westerners find dysentery and hepatitis instead of spiritual fulfilment. In Heat and Dust, a missionary tells the protagonist that in India 'nothing human means anything here.' The view of derelict Westerners in India is continued in Jhabvala's Western novel Three Continents where menial jobs for the Fourth World movement are carried out by over-zealous, sick, drugged Western followers. India is imaged in a hotel in New Delhi and the American Harriet Wishwell submits completely to her half-Indian husband Crishi. Jhabvala's statement of wanting to write about 'myself in India' translates itself into the various Western characters who have chosen to come to India or are forced by circumstances to live there. Their arrogance or their acceptance is viewed with ironic detachment; yet the various strategies they develop to survive in India evoke our pity. Like Scott's Anglo-Indian politicians and administrators Jhabvala's Westerners cannot get out. The faces of Scott's protagonists reflect the 'sourness', in Jhabvala's novels they become 'mean and clenched' (HD: 21).

The anger and disillusionment of Jhabvala's characters is part of the writer's own disenchantment and frustration:

> All the time I know myself to be on the back of this great animal of poverty and backwardness.
>
> (AEI: 10)

The irony with which Jhabvala views her unhappy frightened Westerners is a deeper, more personally-felt and ambivalent irony than the wise and genial

irony of Forster's exposure of the prejudice and ignoble suspicions that plague both Anglo-Indians and Aziz. An example is here given:

> [Police Superintendent McBride] wanted to keep the proceedings as clean as possible, but Oriental Pathology, his favourite theme, lay around him, and he could not resist it. Taking off his spectacles, as was his habit before enunciating a general truth, he looked into them sadly, and remarked that the darker races are physically attracted to the fairer, but not *vice versa* - not a matter for bitterness this, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observation will confirm.
>
> (Forster 1936: 213)

The tone of the above extract is comic. The narrator humorously emphasizes McBride's awareness of the unusually large number of Indians in the court-room in 'lay around him'. They are both as real to him and as unreal to him as subjects of a study called 'Oriental Pathology'. Then, to get others to see the truth, McBride must first restrict his own vision by taking off his glasses. Forster highlights the relish and studied deliberation of McBride enunciating an Anglo-Indian truth. The concluding statement humorously captures the Anglo-Indians' almost resigned acceptance of the inherent virtues of Anglo-Saxons.

The irony of Jhabvala's two novels with clear Forsterian overtones is however dark and ominous. If Forster's novel posits the possibility of inter-racial friendships and universal harmony, Jhabvala subverts this optimism and suggests that in the new dominion of modernized India and exploitative self-seeking Indians, roles appear to be reversed and the possibilities of concord are dim. The three parts of A New Dominion 'Delhi', 'The Holy City' and 'Maupur' seem to be ironic echoes of those of the earlier novel, for they are settings for increasingly pessimistic portrayals of misplaced faith and devotion of Westerners in Indians.

Heat and Dust continues the ironic counter-pointing to Forster's vision of concord and spirituality offered by India, in the troubled, possessive and ambivalent attitude of the Nawab to his friend Harry and

lover Olivia. Harry stays for eight years in India not for love of the country (he suffers physically from the heat and the food) but for the Nawab. The story of the modern narrator by contrast offers more possibilities of an India that refines and fulfils. The natural beauties of India and meaningful sustaining relationships prepare her for the journey to an *ashram* up in the cold mountains. Yet this more positive picture of India is hedged with irony. Contemporary India has all the features of India of the Raj: intrigue, suspicion, poverty, taboos and superstitions. The survival of the modern narrator in the heat and dust of the lowlands is a personal triumph of an alert, sensible Westerner: her future is still uncertain.

The only link between Jhabvala's fiction and Kaye's writing and the Anglo-Indian romance sub-genre she is aligned to, is in the image of a dark, secret, potentially dangerous India that appears in Jhabvala's later Indian novels. The vibrant, colourful world of India and the zest and charm of her characters give way to a predominance of aspects of Indian life that are ugly, unpleasant and frightening. In A New Dominion India is captured in Rao Sahib's glittering parties where opportunists, strident nationalists and chauvinistic leaders prevail; in the dead and dying who line the streets of the holy city of Benares and in the Retreat at Maupur where Asha continues the sexual excesses of her father. In Heat and Dust the parallel stories of the two women are intensified by a sense of the continuity of the deep-seated problems of the Raj in the poverty and backwardness of contemporary India. Yet despite all this, it is important to remember that Kaye's wild-eyed *fakirs*, strange rituals, violent Muslim *maulanas*, intrigues and scandals are part of a stagey, glamorous back-cloth of romance catering for readerships in the Home Countries. For Jhabvala these darker images of India, (continued in the Western novels which are not strictly Anglo-Indian works) are part of a philosophically-perceived pessimism of the hopeless quest for love and fulfilment. The

dark aspects of India are in ironic contrast to the serenity and spirituality the seekers expect from India.

Related to the subject of the experience of India, the central concern of Anglo-Indian writing is the subject of East-West relations. Whether the relations are on the political, socio-cultural, racial or spiritual level the basic message is a variation of what is popularly accepted as Kipling's Law. The fact remains, even if the degree of the rift or the nature of the conflict may vary, that East and West will never meet.

Before 1924, Anglo-Indian novels portrayed generally harmonious relationships between Indians and English as the fact of white supremacy was drummed in and 'relations' with the Indians meant polite often patronizing tolerance. The Indians that the Anglo-Indians liked and wrote about were those of royal, aristocratic stock, were Western-educated or sympathetic to the British presence, or were Christians.(20)

Even as he suggested the possibility of love and friendship, Forster's A Passage to India highlighted the emptiness behind the facade of English benign rule and Indian acceptance of it. Both sides were shown to be hypocritical. The novel highlighted the tragedy of East-West conflict, the loss, in terms of human happiness and honour, because of the inability of Indians and English to love without constraints. Both sides were shown as paying lip-service to harmony. They did not and could not believe in it.

Although Forster's novel influenced Anglo-Indian writing as nothing before it had ever done, it offered no new vision for Anglo-India. There was no meeting ground yet for the Fielding-Aziz relationship. At best there had been a bridging on a personal level. The precarious, ironic note of the ending of A Passage to India reflects the nature of the relationship between two men separated by differences of colour, creed and politics. Furthermore, the encounter between white and native is a

projection of the confrontation between the homosexual and society. Aziz and Fielding are faint shadows of the perfect male closeness that Forster believed possible in a homosexual relationship. It is on the spiritual and religious level that Forster poses a tentative hope. He suggests the spiritual harmony between Godbole, Mrs. Moore and a wasp. However, set against the vast, non-spiritual machinery on which the empire rested in India, the all-encompassing love glimpsed by the two characters seems special and isolated.

The Bibighar affair in The Raj Quartet symbolizes not just the English-Indian relationship, a no-win situation for both sides, but also Scott's similar concern to Forster's - the difficulty of making love prevail in a human world gone wrong. The image related to the Bibighar incident is that of a girl running in the dark in the fourth book of the Quartet (Scott 1976: 113). She runs to future warfare, to the loss of love, the Partition massacres and 'total and unforgivable disaster'. Scott rewrites Forster in that the possibility of friendship, of human closeness and the non-event of the Marabar Caves translates into the impossibility of concord with the uncompromising reality of the gang-rape, the destruction of a love between an Englishwoman and an Indian man and the brutal, destructive homosexuality of Merrick.

Scott's assault on British prejudice and delusion is relieved by characters who try to bridge the gulf by making a commitment and 'crossing over' rather than remaining dry on safe but 'sterile' banks. Sarah Layton, similar in many ways to Daphne Manners, rises above the smug, comfortable prejudices of her family and Anglo-India to genuinely bridge the gulf. She is the only woman who visits Lady Manners in her houseboat, she is moved by the sight of the baby Parvati and the box containing Daphne's belongings and her interest in the Hari-Daphne affair is of their personal relationship rather than as representatives of two camps.

The Raj Quartet examines East-West relations from the various levels of the Englishman's experience of India. On the political level it looks at the plight of the 'unknown Indian' against the huge, creaking edifice of the Raj. On the social and racial levels it examines the sterility of Anglo-Indian life in the prejudices and violent homosexuality of Merrick and the thwarted relationships between Daphne and Hari. Even Daphne is not exempt from Anglo-Indian notions of superiority and 'taking charge'. In a letter to her aunt she painfully acknowledges that after the rape, it was she who directed Kumar on what to do and say:

> I never gave him a chance ... as I would have let an Englishman ... even in my panic there was this assumption of superiority, of privilege, of believing I knew what was best for both of us, because the colour of my skin put me on the side of those who never told a lie.
>
> (Scott 1976: 425)

On the spiritual level, the British behaviour in India mirrors for people like Sister Ludmilla, Lady Manners and Mabel Layton, the heart of darkness of man's existence. Like ancient seers these women foresee the future, and are filled with despair. Parvati, Daphne's child, symbol of one brief harmonious communication between an Indian man and an Englishwoman is taken care of by Lady Manners; an act of love by one of Scott's few characters who do not take the pukka life too seriously.

This capacity to love and forgive and 'cross over' affords relief from the sad Anglo-Indian world Scott creates. However, like a stubborn symbol of East-West relations, the Bibighar affair recurs and is talked about with undiminished fascination. Despite the various interpretations, a few facts remain to emphasize the tragedy of Anglo-Indian life and East-West relations. The first is connected with what Daphne writes in her journal:

> [The Indian attackers] assaulted me because they had watched an Indian making love to me. The taboo was broken for them.

(Scott 1976: 410)

The second concerns what happens after Daphne has been raped and Hari insists on keeping her back for he loves her and wants to be with her:

> It bewildered me. It sent me from panic to worse panic, because of what they might do to him if he said to *them*, 'I love her. We love each other'.

(Scott 1976: 409)

These two facts epitomise the terrible odds against English-Indian harmony.

East-West conflict and harmony in Godden's novels revolve round personal and cultural matters. She portrays conflict between different modes of life, two cultures clashing in differences of outlook and attitudes. There is a conspicuous and happy absence of bitter animosity, of deep and mutual political and racial suspicion. A Westerner is placed in culturally alien circumstances, differences and misunderstandings arise because of ignorance or pride. Common sense and mutual respect for human qualities of bravery and patience prevail and usually love grows in the process. In Black Narcissus the nuns treat the Indians as fellow human beings and although the Sisters and the mountain people remain in separate cultural and social pockets, there is mutual respect and concern. The nuns leave Mopu not because they hate it, but because they love it too much. In Godden's novels the term East-West relations does not automatically conjure ideas of conflict and tragedy.

East-West relations in the form of troubled relationships, or as in Scott, in individual perceptions of the Raj in India and its effect on the people, do not really exist in Kaye's fiction. Kaye's novels are historically oriented, centring round the activities of the British at the height of their imperial power in India. The situation was one of the rulers and the ruled. The British were in India to extricate the natives from the muddle and danger they consistently exposed themselves to - petty

feudal fights, tribal wars and Russian territorial ambition in the North. No protagonist of Kaye is personally involved in efforts to understand, win over or harmonize with an Indian. The Indian characters are as predictable as the Western ones and Kaye has a number of ready-made stereotype characters and situations on which to develop her stories: brave Englishmen suitably tanned and bilingual to undertake undercover work and various disguises, weak and unreliable British officers besotted by drink and Indian women, faithful Indian comrades and bearers who look up to the English not just as masters but as mother and father. Yet, even this *man-bap* principle built on the myth of the white man's superiority and the Indian's helplessness gives way to a larger Anglo-Indian truth that there is no common ground on which Westerners and Indian can meet. In Far Pavilions, the childhood friendship and military adventures between Ashton and Zarin end in the predictable way: 'Ash ... realized ... that between himself and Zarin there yawned a gulf as wide as the one that separated him from all caste Hindus' (Kaye 1978: 806).

In Jhabvala's fiction the relationship of Westerners and Indians is one of a number of subjects she explores in her concern to highlight human foibles, weaknesses and self-delusion. The general idea Jhabvala gives of East-West relations is that Westerners have a difficult time in India. She acknowledges the physical discomforts showing that heat, dust, filth and smell have much to do with a Westerner's inner conflicts and fears. More importantly she highlights the attitude of the Indians towards them. In earlier Anglo-Indian fiction Kipling's 'half devil and half child' needed the help and guidance of the stable, strong Anglo-Indian (Islam 1979: 5). Jhabvala modifies this child-guardian relationship by showing that modern Indians no longer fear the repercussions of the white man's power nor do they need his protection. Even the need to pay lip service is gone and past grievances are channelled in nationalism, chauvinism, prejudice and exploitation. The Indians may be as child-like and

unreliable as their Anglo-Indian prototypes, like Gopi, or urbane and Westernized like Rao Sahib's friends in A New Dominion but they are articulate in their criticism of the English and the assertion of their own national superiority. With sharp irony Jhabvala exposes her protagonists' superficial values. The unobtrusive refined Raymond of A New Dominion, a genuine lover of Indian culture, is exploited and unappreciated by Gopi whilst the dilettante Esmond, who hates India but shows off his knowledge of Indian literature, is tolerated by the Westernized elite in Esmond in India, as a kind of useful accessory. Yet Jhabvala's irony is even-handed and the Westerners in India, -drifters, opportunists, spongers, pale shadows of those who attempted to rule morally - are exposed for their delusions and prejudice.

A number of Jhabvala's short stories focus on the problems of Englishwomen married to Indians. By and large these domestic issues of prying and quarrelling in-laws, of husbands taking the side of their families are seen as problems of marital adjustment and minor differences in attitudes. It is with stories of Westerners who come to India to be revitalized by its culture and religion that Jhabvala's irony intensifies. The depraved, sensual Indian stereotype of Anglo-Indian writing has its Jhabvalan counterpart in charismatic, magnetic Indian men who exploit yet another stereotype. This is the modern Indian's set image of the Western woman as lonely, promiscuous, and therefore fair game for its men. East-West relations in Jhabvala's later Indian fiction are shadowed by the motif of sexual exploitation by mesmerizing, sexually potent Indians of gullible, idealistic young Western women.

In A New Dominion Swamiji 'rebuilds' the personalities of Lee, Margaret and Evie; in the same novel Gopi sponges on Raymond's generosity, abuses the latter's love for him and then finally declares that Raymond cannot understand anything about Indians. In A Backward Place the ageing Hungarian beauty Etta, a 'prisoner' of India is a convenient mistress for

the rich hotelier Mr. Gupta. When he leaves her for a younger Indian girl, she has to move on to an older Indian and to yet another necessary relationship. In 'A Spiritual Call' Daphne lives for the 'beautiful moments' as a disciple of Swamiji. Even after her realization that the love she feels is more personal than religious, Daphne stays on as a faithful follower content to serve unnoticed in the company of younger female devotees.

In A Backward Place Jaykar, a nationalist, chides Sudhir, a young idealistic Bengali disillusioned with India's progress, for being too self-effacing:

> It is a very bad habit of our people - always to make much of their own faults even when these faults are not there at all but are only something that has been invented by interested foreigners in order to sum up the Indian character. As if the Indian character could be summed up! ... We are a bit too wily for that. Let them say one thing about us and the next moment they will find we are exactly the opposite - yes indeed ... we are a slippery lot.
>
> (BP: 141)

This is an interesting piece of nationalistic self-analysis in that Jaykar, in asking Sudhir to counter Indian stereotyping concocted by the Westerners, is himself ironically owning up to and thinking in the way the English have always thought of the Indians - 'wily' and 'slippery'. Coming as it does in A Backward Place, the first novel where Western characters outnumber Indians, it captures with ironic humour, from an Indian's point of view what is in effect the main characteristic Jhabvala highlights of Indian protagonists in their relations with foreigners.

As part of her larger concern to show the ironic reality of the quest for love and happiness Jhabvala shows the introverted, lonely, well-meaning and deluded Westerners constantly coming up against the Indians' self-interest and unpredictability. Yet in wilful blindness, these Westerners, like their Indian counterparts in the short stories, continue to suffer indifference, exploitation or humiliation. An episode in Heat

and Dust captures the tragic nature of East-West relationships in modern India. The newly-arrived Ms. Rivers looks out of the window and records her impressions of a Bombay street-scene:

> The sidewalk outside A's was crowded - not with Indians but with Europeans. They looked a derelict lot.
> .....
> I looked down again at the figures sprawled under the white street lights outside A's Hotel ... they did look like souls in Hell.
>
> (HD: 5-6)

Jhabvala's fiction belongs more to the Anglo-Indian tradition than to Indo-Anglian writing. Whether the focus is on Indians, Europeans or both Indians and Europeans in India, Jhabvala writes with a European sensibility formed by a World War, the Holocaust and a growing consciousness of disillusionment with life in India. The ironic perspective, the sense of the flawed and absurd in human life is seen in her exposure of weaknesses and delusions. This perspective darkens in the later Indian novels beginning with A Backward Place for it mirrors her own, increasingly disillusioned Westerner's experience of Indian and Indians. Thus as happens with her writing in the Indo-Anglian tradition where love for India is balanced by a critical view of Indian manners and hypocrisies, Jhabvala brings to her Anglo-Indian writing the same dialectics of love and hate, faith and disillusionment. Her writing combines Forster's guarded affirmations of India's refining educating possibilities, Godden's pure joy in the Indian milieu and the melancholy, pessimistic view of life of Paul Scott.

Jhabvala's oeuvre is often seen as the product of two periods in her life, the Indian period and the present American one. Yet all her novels share so many common features that they are more profitably seen as a

whole, chronologically developing thematic and stylistic features. The central most important unifying characteristic of Jhabvala's work is her irony. This ironic, European,point of view distinguishes those aspects of her writing considered 'Indo-Anglian'. It also adds a deeper and more critical insight in her portrayal of East-West relations and life in India in the 'Anglo-Indian' aspects of her writing. At a later part in her career, when she writes about Western protagonists in America, ironic counterpoint will again feature in her portrayals of her characters' search for Love and Beauty. Jhabvala's novels present a development of this ironic sensibility, from the tolerant humorous irony of a European's introduction to new sights and sounds, to the sharper tone of an initiated outsider more aware of the social ills of the country, and finally a darker ironic perspective that sees human ideals and quests as essentially meaningless.

CHAPTER TWO

IRONIC FICTION WITHIN A DUAL PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

The art of irony 'is the art of saying something without really saying it. It is an art that gets its effects from below the surface....' (Muecke 1969: 5). The object of this study is to explore the fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala by examining how she develops this 'art'. This will be done by utilizing Northrop Frye's schema, based on his theory of mythos (pregeneric narrative) in Anatomy of Criticism (1957), as a basis for the categorisations of structure and ironic emphasis in relation to Jhabvala's use of a dual philosophical framework of Hindu and Platonic ideas to achieve depth and resonance to her irony. The chapters that follow, will integrate Frye's categorisation with the framework in order to show the workings of Jhabvala's irony; it will be an attempt to make explicit what is implicit in Jhabvala's writing.

> For most 'serious' writers ... irony is now much less a rhetorical or dramatic strategy which they may or may not decide to employ, and much more often a mode of thought silently imposed upon them, by the general tendency of the times.
>
> (Muecke 1969: 10)

Jhabvala's sense of irony, her tendency consistently to see and write ironically, may be seen as partly the consequence of experiences that have shaped her personality and literary interests. One of these experiences may be assumed to be her academic training in English Literature. Her particular area of study and research was literature of the eighteenth century; her Masters thesis was "The Short Story in England, 1700-1750".(1) Of the many writers she mentions, she praises Steel and Addison, well-known writers of the genre of 'character-books' and 'character studies' which highlighted moral issues and ideals. Jhabvala writes of the humour from Steel's pen, his talents of observation and shrewd perception of the way people speak and behave. He could 'chip down a

scene to its most essential elements, a word, a gesture suggesting the whole' (Jhabvala 1950: 134). Richardson is singled out for his 'oblique method of narration' where events are 'not described directly but seen through the minds of the characters affected by them' (Jhabvala 1950: 190). The influence of research in this area may perhaps be seen in Jhabvala's style which echoes that of the best essayists and short story writers of the period: the tolerant tone, the air of polite amusement, the Defoe-like facility for building complete verisimilitude with quiet authentic tones, the economy of language and the skill in portraying highly individualized protagonists as well as memorable peripheral characters.

Jhabvala was exposed to the literary attitudes and techniques of the age of Prose and Reason, the period in which the art of irony became a dominant mode. Form, balance, restraint and harmony are some of the main literary features of this period. Jhabvala's writing displays Augustan brevity and the wit of the ironists. Gooneratne mentions that the characters of worth in Jhabvala's novels are those 'who observe standards of decency in their personal relationships with others', and who show Augustan virtues of 'elegance of mind and delicacy of behaviour' (Gooneratne 1983: 22).

Jhabvala's writing, particularly her early fiction of Indian family life has often been compared to that of Jane Austen and Chekhov. She has a 'preference for the great masters of the novel' (AEI: 10) and enjoys reading Doestoyevsky, Chekhov and Turgenev (Unsigned article 1973: 31). She acknowledges that the society she portrays, post-Independence India of the fifties and sixties, is similar to Regency England and Russia of the pre-revolutionary days. Of the comparison to Jane Austen she agrees they write about the same sort of society, 'the leisured middle classes, mostly concerned with eating and marrying'. She also modestly allows that 'perhaps my way of looking at things may have been somewhat similar to

hers - a sort of ironic detachment?' (Agarwal 1974: 33-34). Gooneratne mentions setting, social backgrounds and themes of her first two novels as recalling Pride and Prejudice and Emma in their satirical portraits of Indian snobs, woven into stories of short-sighted elders and maturing young lovers (Gooneratne 1983: 18). For these two writers there is the predominance of satire and irony, the acute yet tolerant perceptions of human weaknesses and hypocrisies and the use of a language that 'gets its effects from below the surface'.

Besides the literary influences of the English writers of the eighteenth century, Jhabvala was also exposed to the naturalistic and sceptical cast of thought of the late seventeenth century philosophy of Locke and Hobbes, and the egalitarianism that characterized eighteenth century political thinking. Perhaps she would also have read two theories on irony: Kierkegaard's Concept of Irony (1841) in which he wrote that irony is a mode of seeing things, a way of viewing existence; or Amiel's view in his Journal Intime (1883-87) that irony springs from a precept of the absurdity of life. As an undergraduate in the 1950s Jhabvala would have read and applied the tenets of New Criticism, training invaluable to her later profession. Cleanth Brooks' and I.A. Richards' emphases on the language of the text, the identification of tone, mood, voice and symbols, would have been familiar to her. Similarly, she would surely have known William Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity (1930) and his programme of close reading for tensions between words and for clues to structure. The sustained ironic viewpoint of Jhabvala's work, and the skilful narrative strategies to highlight irony, are products of her academic background as well as of personal circumstances.

The thematic preoccupations of Jhabvala's novels and her admission to being a 'natural satirist' (Rutherford 1975: 27) are characteristic of the 'outsider' writer. As mentioned in Chapter One Jhabvala is the 'born outsider' always in the process of adapting to a new environment. Her key

themes reflect this: the exploitation of an individual by another; of the domination of one culture by another; the helplessness of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised. Her later novels are studies of people trapped in hostile environments and of the boundaries and bonds affecting strangers in strange lands. Yet the alien status built up from repeated displacements allows her, even in her deepest disillusionment with India and its paradoxes or in her coldly intuitive studies of American manners, a detachment and objectivity to record her perception of the discrepancy between words and deeds, actions and results. Even in her happy early novels, the stance is clear. Jhabvala displays:

> [The] ironic attitude [that] implies that there is in things a basic contradiction, that is to say, from the point of view of our reason, a fundamental and irremediable absurdity.
>
> (Georges Palante quoted in Muecke 1969: 120)

In the later novels when the literary influences of eighteenth century literature on the setting, plot and characterization in her works is less easily discerned and when Jhabvala's fiction, less cheerful, moves on to themes related to her own position in India and the psychological condition of her troubled protagonists, irony and the ironical style remain central to her fiction.

Muecke defines specific irony as 'corrective or normative irony, the kind employed in the service of satire or controversy ...'. In these instances of irony 'the victim is isolated; he is 'in the wrong' and over against him are the rest of society or mankind who are 'in the right' and safe (Muecke 1969: 119). General irony on the other hand is 'life itself or any general aspect of life seen as fundamentally and inescapably an ironic state of affairs:

> No longer is it a case of isolated victims; we are all victims of impossible situations ... of Amiel's Law of Irony, and of Kierkegaard's World Irony.
>
> (Muecke 1969: 120)

In a broad sense there is a movement from specific to general irony in Jhabvala's novels: from irony employed in the service of satire to the emphasis on a central contradiction, one great incongruity:

> [This is] the appearance of free and self-valued but temporally finite egos in a universe that seems to be utterly alien, utterly purposeless, completely deterministic and incomprehensibly vast.
>
> (Muecke 1969: 121)

What is important to note is that even in the early domestic novels where there are satiric exposures of 'victims', 'victimizations' and 'aberrancy', the existence of 'a world otherwise safely moving on the right track' (Muecke 1969: 119), is hardly present in Jhabvala's work. The rest of society is neither right nor free of aberrancy. Thus the specific irony of the earlier sunnier novels is not without signs of a dark perspective that sees fundamental contradictions and paradoxes as predicaments of the human condition.

General irony requires that the ironist be detached from the contradictions she perceives as ironic. Yet the ironist cannot help but see herself as part of the ironic world. Jhabvala is thus detached and involved at the same time. In the later and darker novels which deal with themes closest to Jhabvala's personal experiences of displacement and vulnerability, we see a resistance to the involvement. Her ironic attitude, coloured by resistance, translates itself into the nihilism of A New Dominion, Three Continents and the dark satire of In Search of Love and Beauty.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Jhabvala's creative association with Merchant Ivory Productions is an important part of her work. The thesis will not however deal in detail with Jhabvala's work in films; references to them will be made in so far as they contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of Jhabvala's narrative technique, thematic

approach or characterization in a particular novel or group of novels. The limited use of the writer's remarkable achievement in film is partly due to the fact that not all the screenplays have been published. A detailed comparison of Jhabvala's work in films in connection with her novels would thus be restricted. Another reason is that Jhabvala sees herself as a novelist and not as a writer of screenplays and this study is an examination of the artistic and personal expression of her written craft. Most important of all Jhabvala's work in films and the available published screenplays studied in relation to her fiction is an interesting and valuable exercise, deserving a separate study.

In Anatomy of Criticism (1957) Frye develops his ideas on archetypal criticism. He sees archetypal elements as offering a specific set of structural regularities for a systematic and schematic approach to literary criticism. To Frye a critic should practise hypothesis-making and result-checking; to help him do so, Frye offers in his book, a kind of taxonomy based on what he sees as archetypal elements operating in the Western literary tradition. Frye's schema of the four mythoi is developed in the third essay. Brief mention should be made of Essays I and II however, for they are relevant to a better understanding and fuller utilization of the narrative schema for this thesis as well as being part of the massive work of synthesis and system-making that is the Anatomy of Criticism.

Essay I, titled Theory of Modes sets up five distinguishable literary modes. In each of the five the hero is a protagonist with a given strength relative to his world. A hero is either mythic, romantic, high mimetic (of most tragedy), low mimetic (of most comedy), or ironic, the literary mode depending on the hero's 'power of action'. Frye sees a historical movement from the mythic hero who is a divine being, to the contemporary hero of the ironic mode who is 'inferior in power and intelligence to ourselves' (AC: 34).

Essay II, Theory of Symbols, shows how given historical perspectives favour certain attitudes towards symbol ('any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention, [AC: 71]). Five phases of symbols, the literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal and anagogic have historical parallels with the five modes of the first essay. Literal symbolism is associated with the techniques of thematic irony, whilst archetypal symbolism is central to romance. The historical scheme of the first essay may now be looked at from the textual perspective, at the level of image and symbol and sense of the word.

In Essay III, Theory of Myths, Frye shows the historical transformations of myths and archetypes, and how structural properties, however skeletal, survive from one occasion to the other in literary writing. Before going on to present the narrative schema, Frye posits three basic categories of imagery: apocalyptic, demonic and analogical. Archetypal imagery represents the world of unlimited desire; demonic imagery symbolizes the world of existential hell; because analogical imagery comes between these two poles it is again divided into three intermediate structures corresponding roughly to the romantic, high and low mimetic modes (AC: 151). Within the categories, cyclical symbols are important and exist in four phases: the four seasons of the year, four periods of life (youth, maturity age and death), four aspects of the water-cycle (rain, fountains, rivers, sea or snow) and the like (AC: 160).

Based on the structures of imagery, theme, plot structure, character and mood, Frye sees 'narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres' (AC: 162). He calls these pregeneric elements mythoi, categorizing these narratives into comedy, romance, tragedy and irony (the latter also called 'realism'). The mythos of comedy corresponds to spring, the romance to that of summer, the tragic mythos corresponds to autumn and that of irony or satire, to winter. The upward movement belongs to comedy and romance, whilst a downward movement

belongs to tragedy and irony placing these two sets dialectically opposed: innocence and experience, apocalypse and nature, the ideal and the actual, the comic and the tragic.

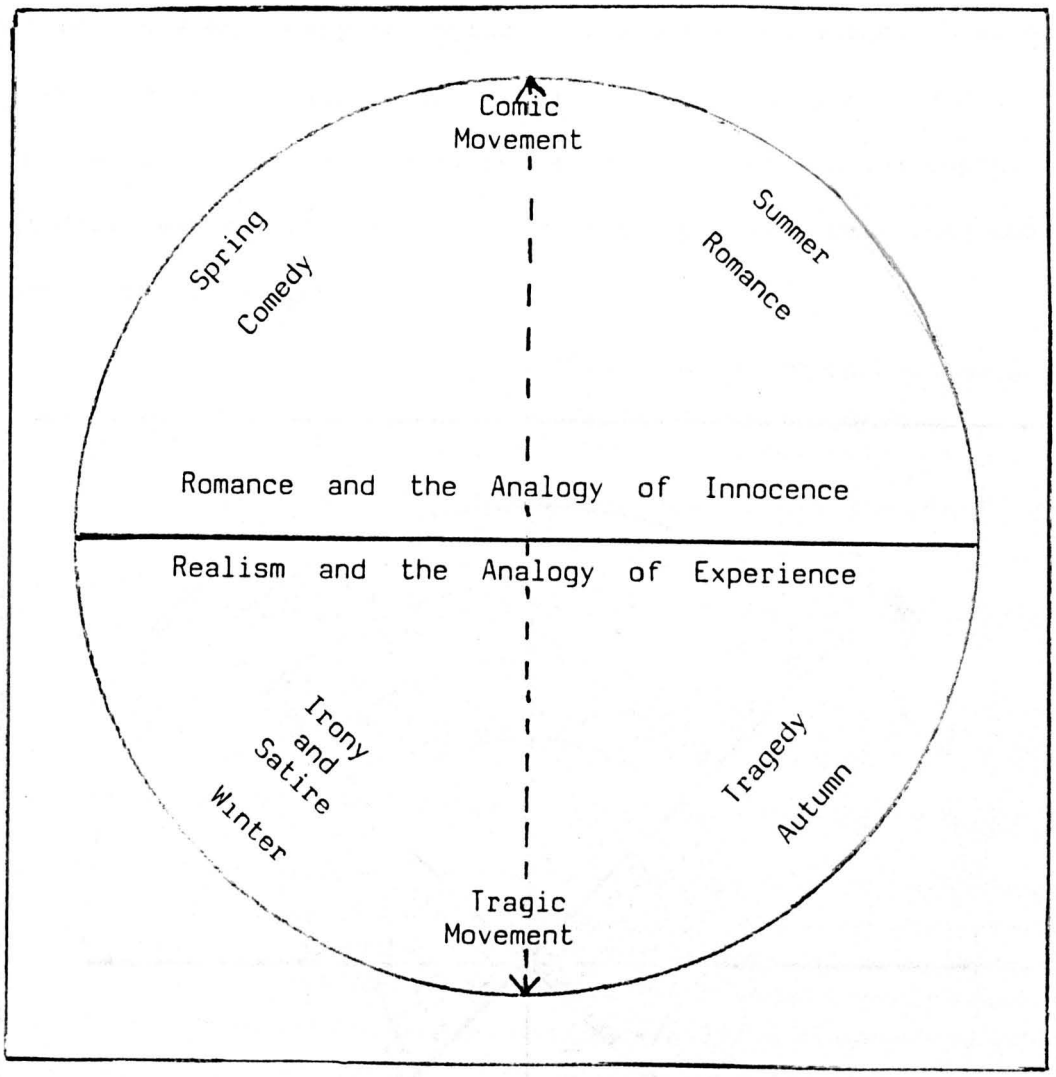


Figure 1:
Cyclical and dialectical pattern of the four mythoi
(Denham 1978: 68)

It is important to remember that adjacent mythoi tend to merge. Tragedy and comedy contrast rather than blend; the same is true of romance and irony, two opposed pairs championing respectively the ideal and the actual. We see from Figure 1 how 'comedy blends insensibly into satire at one extreme and into romance at the other; and how romance may be comic or

tragic; [how] tragic extends from high romance to bitter and ironic realism' (AC: 162).

Frye's twenty-four category schema (his 'somewhat forbidding piece of symmetry') is built on his theory of phases or literary structures which can be isolated in any one mythos. There are six phases to each mythos. We have thus a pattern that shows the continuity of forms and images in the six phases of each mythos as well as between corresponding phases of different mythoi. Figure 2 shows the parallel relations among the phases of the four mythoi.

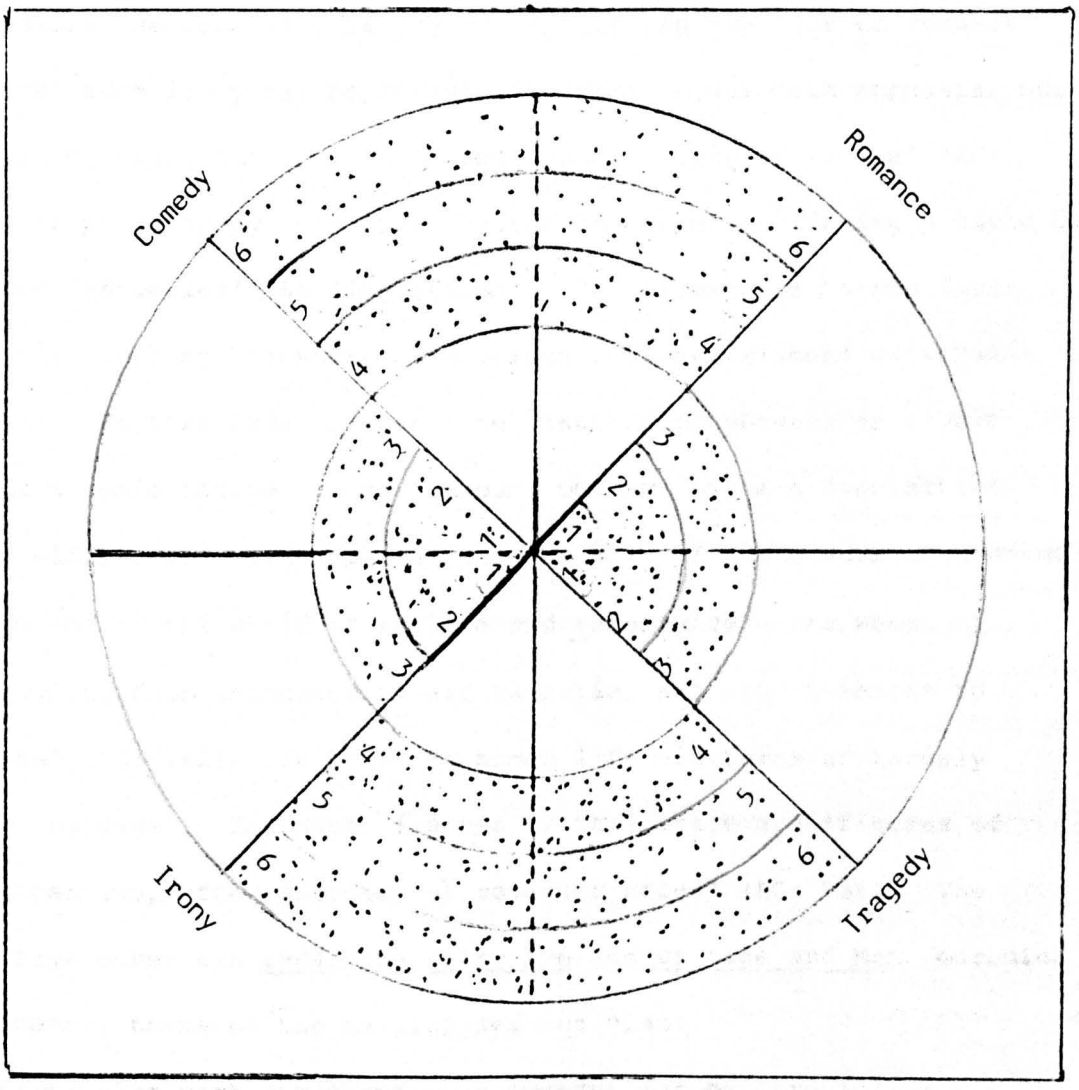


Figure 2:
Parallel relations among the phases of the four mythoi
(Denham 1978: 77)

Each of the phases of a mythos is parallel to, but not coincident with, a phase in the adjacent mythos. The first three phases of one mythos are always related to the first three of an adjacent mythos. This occurs only within the opposing halves of the innocence/experience dichotomy, that is, comedy and irony; romance and tragedy. Relation with the last three phases of any two mythoi can occur only within the same half of the innocence-experience dichotomy, that is, irony and tragedy, comedy and romance.

The mythos of irony with which the study is mainly concerned is 'literature concerned primarily with a "realistic" level of experience, usually taking the form of a parody or contrasting analogue to romance'. He adds that such irony may be 'tragic or comic in its main emphasis; when comic it is normally identical with the usual meaning of satire' (AC: 366). First phase irony is 'satire of the low norm' portraying a world of undisplaced 'anomalies' and 'injustices'. It corresponds to the first phase of the comic mythos where 'a humorous society triumphs or remains undefeated'. Frye reminds us that 'The distinction between an ironic comedy and a comic satire ... is tenuous, but not quite a distinction without a difference'. Sixth-phase irony is part of the downward movement of tragedy and of the world of realism and experience: the wheel of fortune falling from innocence toward hamartia, and from hamartia to catastrophe' (AC: 162). It presents human life 'in terms of largely unrelieved bondage'. The human figures of this phase are 'figures of misery or madness, often parodies of romantic roles' (AC: 238). The examples Frye gives are 1984; The Hairy Ape and Of Mice and Men, parodies of the romantic theme of the helpful servant giant.

A particular work for example, a comedy, may be 'ironic' or 'romantic' or a romance described as 'comic' or 'tragic' depending on certain internal features that locate it within one of Frye's phases. The stories of St. George and Perseus and their successful quests are examples

of third-phase or typical phase of romance. Similarly, Greek New Comedy, the plays of Plautus and Terence belong to the typical third-phase of comedy when the new society comes of age, matures and triumphs (AC: 185).

The traditional characters of Greek drama form an important aspect of Frye's classification of literature. The typical characters of comedy as given in a pamphlet called the Tractatus Coislinianus are 'the alazons or imposters, the eirons or self-deprecators, and the buffoons (bomolochoi) (AC: 172). The Tractatus is closely related to Aristotles' Ethics which contrasts the first two characters and goes on to contrast the buffoon and the rustic or agroikos (literally, churlish). 'The contest of eiron and alazon forms the basis of the comic action' whilst the buffoon and the churl 'polarize the comic mood' (AC:172).

From Aristotle's Ethics we have the concept of irony where the eiron is the man who deprecates himself as opposed to the alazon. The eiron makes himself invulnerable by self-deprecation. The term irony is derived from the eiron for it indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is 'which in literature becomes most commonly a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible, or ... a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning' (AC: 40).

An important character in ironic fiction is the pharmakos who has the role of a scapegoat or arbitrarily chosen victim (AC: 367). Frye relates the victim-figure with that of the tyrant-leader who victimizes. The imagery connected with the pharmakos and with later phases of the ironic mythos is sparagmos. Sparagmos is the archetypal theme of irony: it is 'the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world' (AC: 192). Images of cruelty, suffering and mutilation dominate for sparagmos means 'the tearing apart of the sacrificial body' (AC: 148). By contrast, the archetypal theme of comedy is anagnorisis,

'recognition of a newborn society rising in triumph' (AC: 192) and the eirons' victory is accompanied by images of a green world.

The different phases of the comic and ironic mythoi highlight different aspects of the eiron's traditional characteristics. In comedy it is the eiron's unobtrusive self-awareness that is seen; in irony of the earlier satiric phases the eiron's canny knowledge of human nature and reliance on timing ensure his survival. In comedy the pharmakos or scapegoat needs only to be expelled from the society and is often tolerated at the harmonious final festivities. The pharmakos of the later phases of the ironic mythos is a victim figure who rejects and is rejected by society. These will be elaborated in the relevant chapters dealing with Jhabvala's novels as will the two character-related features common to comedy and irony: firstly, the alazon-eiron conflict; secondly the element of 'confident unawareness' that all alazons, lacking in self-knowledge, show. The irony of most ironic situations exist only with 'a complementary alazony'. From Jhabvala's comedies to her ironies we see various alazons who not only blindly assume that something is, or is not the case, but compound the ignorance with confidence (Muecke 1969: 30).

The categorisations of the comic and ironic mythoi provide a useful basis for the structuring of Jhabvala's ten novels according to the degree and nature of elements of irony seen and the structural regularities they show: the hero's capacity to act, the predominant characters, the dominant symbols and images. Thus the schema facilitates a better understanding of the over-all development or movement of Jhabvala's ironic perspectives. There is a very clear correspondence between the movement from comedy to satiric irony to the darkly ironic fourth and fifth phases and the chronological sequence of Jhabvala's novels. Although the novels may show more or less of the distinguishing features for a particular phase or grouping there is a discernible movement from a comic world of

the Indian family novels to an ironic world where human endeavour is marked by waste and suffering.

Despite the ironic undercutting and ambivalence in the sharply satiric exposures and in the resolutions, the comic world does exist in Jhabvala's first six novels, although with diminishing strength. It is seen in the way the stories conform to certain aspects of the comic mythos. Members adjust personal to social needs for a degree of integration and harmony. The comic world exists in the way proper relationships are worked out and adhered to through familial loyalties and affection (AC: 219). Even in the darkening world of Esmond in India and Get Ready for Battle the possibility of a movement from illusion to knowledge, to the building up of a redeemed society is hinted at in the alert single-mindedness of the eirons. Less tangible than in the early comedies, there is still a sense of comedy's optimism and vitality of action in these six early novels.

With these considerations in mind the task of explaining the manner of Jhabvala's irony - the strategies she employs for ironic effect, the orchestrating of events and episodes for ironic situations - becomes a more systematic exercise as we proceed, on a kind of thematic and chronological continuum (or cycle), from the more overt ironic style of the satirist to the more covert strategies of the impersonal detached ironist who perceives life's contradictions as general irony.

In anatomizing the huge body of world literature with his categorisation and 'diagraming', his setting up of conventions and genres which play the role of premature ultimates' (Wimsatt 1966: 89), Frye has been criticized for a concern with generalities and correspondences at the expense of the text and textual analysis. For this study however his schema, will, with the philosophical framework, facilitate careful textual analysis of the workings of Jhabvala's irony.

The first group of novels is the ironic comedies, To Whom She Will, The Nature of Passion and The Householder. The first two are stories of young love, while The Householder is about a couple's first year in an arranged marriage. Family conflicts revolve round the choice of marriage partners and between modern and more traditional lifestyles. Comic emphasis is on the blocking characters, the boastful or deluded alazons. The eirons, more enlightened and aware, finally reconcile personal and social priorities to integrate with the family. It is the nature of the integration that makes these stories first-phase comedies, that phase closest to the ironic mythos.

In first-phase comedy the humorous society triumphs or remains undefeated (AC: 177). According to Frye the 'humour' is 'usually someone with a good deal of social prestige and power, who is able to force much of the play's society into line with his obsession' (AC: 169). The humour is Ben Jonson's character in drama who, according to his theory of 'humours' is dominated by a ruling passion, that is, obsessed by his humour, expressing a state of ritual bondage and expected in the play to repeat his obsession (AC: 168). Thus the term 'humorous society' means one that is centred round a powerful alazon or humour with a certain obsession, or, one identified with a predominant 'humour', passion or preoccupation. In first-phase comedy the triumph of the humorous society is seen in the way the alazon or alazons' absurd or irrational law or whim is accepted. Whilst a certain degree of harmonious integration is achieved, the victory of the humours signals the basic difference between first and third phase comedy where the alazons' ruling passion offers no threat to society with the victory of the enlightened society. In first-phase comedy the eirons adapt to the 'habit' and 'ritual bondage' of their society. The reader is however made aware of the special qualities of Amrita and Krishna Sen in To Whom She Will, of Prem in The Householder and to a lesser extent of Lalaji in The Nature of Passion.

The second set of novels comprises the comic ironies Esmond in India, Get Ready for Battle and A Backward Place. Although there are comic elements in these novels, irony is central. The stories centre round divisive family conflicts, marital disharmony and the ambivalent triumph of the eiron protagonists who strike an uneasy compromise with the society of the alazons by accepting its power yet becoming isolated (or voluntarily isolating themselves) from the humorous society. These novels may be seen as first-phase irony, satiric exposures of 'a world ... full of anomalies ... crimes and yet ... permanent and undisplaceable' (AC: 226).

In Search of Love and Beauty, a later novel but the first of the two Western novels, is best seen as second-phase irony 'a setting of ideas, and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain' (AC: 230). The novel ironically examines the quest for love and happiness by three generations of European refugees in New York. It exposes the fevered commitment of seekers to an ideal against the instant self-fulfilment programme offered by guru-philosopher Leo Kellerman at his Academy of Human Development.

In the third group are the darker, descending-phase ironies, A New Dominion and Heat and Dust. Though set in India these are stories that centre mainly on Western protagonists interacting with India and Indians in their ultimately hopeless search for a fulfilment or spirituality they feel India can offer. These two novels fit best into fourth-phase irony for the lonely, self-deceived seekers are the pharmakos or scapegoat figures of the ironic mode, victims of ruthless, transcendent tyrant-leaders. Three Continents in the Western grouping offers the darkest perspective on the quest theme. Frye observes that:

> Irony descends from the low mimetic: it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it.

(AC: 42)

The central seekers of these novels, Lee in A New Dominion, Olivia of Heat and Dust and Harriet Wishwell of Three Continents are idealistic, deeply committed to the choices they make and ultimately victims. In them elements of the self-deceived alazon, the resilient eiron and the arbitrary scapegoat figures combine to produce a kind of mythic quality to their quest. Imagery of suffering, mutilation and waste dominates. Symbolic characters, omens and portents are important. A number of short stories that feature the quest for love and happiness will be briefly referred to in connection with these later ironies. Of these the main ones are 'An Experience of India' (AEI: 163-188); 'Desecration' (HIBAHM: 251-268); and the uncollected short stories, 'A Summer by the Sea' (1978) and 'Commensurate Happiness' (1980).

The movement in Jhabvala's writing, from irony in a comic world to an ironic view that sees in things a fundamental and irremediable absurdity, a concern from the manners of man to, in Morton Gurewitch's phrase, 'the morals of the Universe' (quoted in Muecke 1969: 120), is in its own way, an indication of the increasingly ironic nature of modern literature. Frye acknowledges that:

> During the last hundred years, fiction has tended increasingly to be ironic in mode.
>
> (AC: 35)

Frye in fact shows that the ironic mode is a parody of form of the other mythoi. From tragedy irony isolates the sense of arbitrariness and the victims' isolation (AC: 41); from comedy the ritual expulsion of the scapegoat is taken and turned into a study of victimization (AC: 45, 46); from romance the quest motif is parodied with the seeker's dream turned into nightmare (AC: 223, 186-187).

Of irony Frye writes:

> The term irony then indicates a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible, or, in a more general way, a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning.
>
> (AC: 40)

In highlighting incongruities between appearance and reality, between dream and fact, irony functions on the implicit existence of a body of norms and principles that, together with the ironist's narrative skill, highlight man as deluded, absurd, blind and powerless. His dreams and actions, his triumphs and defeats are constantly seen against these norms and ideals that are variously adopted, adapted, abused and rationalized. Ironic effect is enhanced when the alert reader catches not only the nuances of the writer's ironical wit but also the cues and signals positioned by the writer as to the norms that frame her stories. The informed reader, cued-in to the ironic signals, participates actively in the reading, enjoying a certain superiority of position.

In Jhabvala's novels, a dual philosophical framework of Hindu and Platonic thought provides a frame of reference by which the incongruity of words and actions, ideals and the actual, are reinforced. Irony and ironic situations are signalled by implicit and explicit reference to these values. These include titles, names of characters and places, images and symbols, epigraphs and introductory notes, and allusions and citations. There are also actions, incidents, situations, relationships and characters that are echoes or parallels of the values of Hinduism and the Platonic quest for true Beauty. It is important to note here that the Hindu ideals utilized are those central principles of modern Hinduism that an interested, non-Indian writer would have learnt of. They enhance the serious, initiated reader's appreciation of Jhabvala's art whilst to the uninitiated they present no obstacle to the enjoyment of her work. The Hindu framework represents a Western writer's judicious use of well-known teachings and textual references to strengthen her ironic narrative.

In the early comedies and ironies of Indian life, irony exposes folly, hypocrisy and vanity as well as affirming, albeit guardedly, the existence of verities and ideals of life. The superiority of the reader position of the ironic mode is generally maintained because the reader discerns the operation of the framework and matches it against the motives and actions of the protagonists. Irony in the early novels is overt in the sense that the narrative generally helps the reader-superiority, allowing him the 'sense of looking down on a scene of bondage ... or absurdity' and maintaining this even 'when the reader feels that he is or might be in the same situation, as the situation is being judged by the norms of a larger freedom (AC: 34). As the ironic viewpoint darkens and the reader becomes increasingly confronted with characters at odds with the environment, victims of duplicity and tyranny, the informed reader loses his advantage. The reference of ideals and values is so eroded with irony that the reader, like the protagonists, is faced with meaninglessness. The dark and chilling view of the human condition is matched with a more impersonal, covert irony: the ironic narrative voice is largely absent as the text is allowed to be partly taken over by naive, self-deceived narrators whose quests for fulfilment become studies of pain and suffering.

The dual philosophical framework is built on certain central Hindu concepts and the Platonic theory of love as he explains it in The Symposium (416 B.C. ?). The central concern of both is the attainment of spiritual transcendence with the leaving behind of material concerns of the mundane world. In Hinduism, the righteous life is lived so that *moksha*, or freedom is obtained from the cycle of rebirths. When the material concerns are left behind, the free individual is able to identify his or her individual self with the impersonal principle of *Brahman*, God or *Atman*. Plato taught that love is the consciousness of need for the Beautiful and the Good. Plato's conception of love begins with a purely

sensuous passion that allows the mind to pass from a sight of the objects of beauty through ever-widening circles of abstraction to the contemplation of Absolute Beauty. The noblest type of lover is the philosopher or lover of wisdom who is capable of ascending above the sensible world and the appreciation of the physical beauty of particular persons to the final vision of the form of Beauty which gives complete knowledge of truth about the whole universe.

The desire for union with *Brahman*, achieved through carrying out religious and worldly duties and practising devotion and piety, is similar to the desire of the Platonic seeker of wisdom for the vision of the true Form of Beauty. Both the successful Hindu and Platonic devotee of higher Eros are shown the complete and unifying knowledge of truth concerning the whole universe.

For both Hinduism and Platonic thought, sensual love is a legitimate stepping stone towards the transcending of the mundane world and reaching a higher plane of experience. Thus the ideal lover or seeker of The Symposium is also the philosopher of the Republic because he is led by examples, or 'shadows' of beauty in the world to the contemplation of the true Form of Beauty or the Form of Good. In The Symposium the attainment of the knowledge of true beauty begins with a human love and appreciation of the physical beauty of a beloved. In a work relevant to this study, Plato's Phaedrus (370 B.C. ?) in the section on the Myth of the Charioteer, Plato writes that the human soul in search of fulfilment is subjected to the conflicting pulls of its baser physical instincts and its spiritual inclinations for transcendence. Its own dark impulses impede the human soul's attempt to soar upwards.

In Hinduism the line between sensual and spiritual love is less well-defined. In the concept of *bhakti*, devotion to a personal god, specifically of *Krishna-bhakti*, intense and passionate worship becomes an erotic mysticism. Krishna, the highest godhead, is also the erotic lover.

The language of profane passion is also that of sacred love. The devout *Krishna-bhakta* (devotee of Krishna) prays for the highest fruition of his devotion - admission to the eternal sport of Krishna and his favourite consort, the amorous Radha. Their sacred love is seen as the mutual love between god and the human soul. The analogy and homology of carnal and spiritual love is yet another important aspect of the philosophical framework for Jhabvala's novels of questers of *moksha* and Love and Beauty. Although it forms a small part of India's enormous epic, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita* is 'not only the most popular but the most commented on of all the sacred texts of Hinduism'(Zaehner 1966: xv). It is the text most frequently cited or alluded to in Jhabvala's novels. It records the dialogue between the god Krishna and the warrior Arjuna on the eve of a great battle between the sons of Pandu (Arjuna is the third of five brothers) and the sons of King Dhritarashtra. The ostensible cause of Krishna's discourse is to persuade Arjuna to fight his kinsmen; in the course of it, Krishna in eighteen teachings, expounds on the main tenets of Hinduism establishing the crucial relationships among duty (*dharma*) discipline (*yoga*), action, knowledge and devotion.

The concept of duty is central to the *Bhagavad Gita*. A man's ordained duty (dharma) is grounded in the reciprocal relationship between cosmic and human action (*karma*), crucial to universal order. Just as Arjuna the warrior must fight his kinsmen without thought for the consequences so the true Hindu must engage in egoless, disciplined action without thought for the fruit of the action if he is to achieve spiritual freedom. The concept of *dharma* is central to the philosophical framework of Jhabvala's Indian novels. It serves as an ironic foil to contrast the pretended and the actual, the ideal and the reality. It throws into relief genuine seekers of moksha as well as ironically exposing the base and materialistic.

Dharma is the broad base on which rest all the ideals of Hinduism. In the same way it underlies the other concepts that feature in Jhabvala's framework. The concept of *atmansiddhi*, the perfecting of the essential nature of man (Organ 1974: p. 28) recurs in Jhabvala's portrayal of pious, altruistic characters, who attempt to fulfil both spiritual and worldly duties. In the *Gita Krishna* mentions the three paths or *yogas* to achieving transcendance: the way of *bhakti* (loving devotion); that of *jnana* (knowledge or contemplation); and *karma* (disciplined action). Again in Jhabvala's novels we see *Krishna's* teachings accommodating her irony.

Dharma operates significantly in the material world for the carrying out of worldly duties is preparation for the hereafter. Parental duties, sibling respect, marital duties and social ethics come under ironic scrutiny. The *asrama* concept is important in Jhabvala's novels for it emphasizes the importance of roles and prescribed duties in Indian society. Harmony is dependant on a man carrying out the duties appropriate to the particular stage of his life, or *asrama*. The true seeker after *atmansiddhi* (human perfecting) organizes his life- duties in four stages. First he is the celibate student, his duties revolving round family and proper study of the scriptures. Later he is the householder, responsible for the material and spiritual harmony of his family. As a hermit or forest-dweller he moves away from the claims of the mundane world to be closer to nature and to prepare for the fourth stage as a mendicant or *saanyasi* who has renounced all worldly duties and waits for release from *samsara* (bondage).

Related to the *asrama* concept is that of the four goals of the good life, broadly related to the asramas. They are the means by which one becomes a full man. No one goal should be missed. *Kama* (the goal of pleasures) and *artha* (of material possessions and physical comforts) belong to the middle stage of life when worldly considerations predominate. The third goal is that of *dharma* (fulfilment of the duties

pertaining to one's station in life) followed by *moksha* (the goal of release and salvation). The liberties taken in the interpretation of the goal of *kama* and *artha* is one of the main targets of Jhabvala's irony.

As the categories built up on Frye's schema are related to the traditional and philosophical framework, we have the basis for looking at the workings of Jhabvala's irony, to get at the depth and resonance her narrative provides. A knowledge of the general development of her ironic perspective from comic-ironic to dark irony, of the thematic emphases of her novels and the related religious or philosophical concepts used, will help in our approach to the ironic strategies Jhabvala employs. A specific concept or ideal, signalled in a title or indicated in an author's note is the basis for the central ironic situation: the story reveals an inherent paradox or irreconcilable contradictions in that ideal. Related ironic situations are set up to emphasize the central issue. Verbal irony with the emphasis on speech is associated with the alazons' unconscious betrayal of their illusions and hypocrisies with the eirons' uneasy coming to terms with necessity or with the pharmakos' blind acceptance and rationalizations on a destructive course of action. The formalist approach of E. Raghavan's study on Jhabvala's irony (1984) concentrates on the traditional typical characters of comedy and irony as Frye presents it in Anatomy of Criticism and highlights examples of verbal, situational, behavioural and intercultural irony. This analysis of the workings of Jhabvala's irony within a dual philosophical framework is therefore a more in-depth study of Jhabvala's irony.

Throughout the six Indian novels the *dharma* concept operates as a useful and effective ironic foil for the stories of personal and family conflicts that revolve round the performance (or non-performance) of duties. We are consistently shown instances of an ironic reversal of the ideal of *dharma*:

> The general notion exists that if each unit or groups in the manifold and complex universe performs its own function correctly, the whole (the individual, the society, and the cosmos) will be harmonious and ordered.
>
> (Key Words, BG, [trans.] Miller 1986: 165)

In the humorous society of the comedies and early ironies, the terms for harmony and order are dictated by alazons and the alazons' conception as to what actions constitute duty. In modern materialistic Delhi, social order, and the carrying out of duties of class, life stage and kinship relations become the rationale for the perpetuation of prejudice and indifference, of clearly defined divisive social demarcations based on money and power. In some cases even the eiron's sense of duty gives way to a more pragmatic interpretation of his *dharma*.

In the first group of ironic comedies the philosophical framework for To Whom She Will is undeveloped: social and traditional issues, rather than religious precepts provide the philosophical emphasis. Norms to do with arranged marriages and interfamily relationships predominate. *Dharma* however operates through the emphases on family duties especially that of the young towards their elders. In The Nature of Passion and The Householder, however, the *dharma* concept operates through two specific religious ideas: that of *rajas* and of the second *asrama* respectively. The nature of passion or *rajas* dominates not just the businessman Lalaji but his entire family. Here the humorous society triumphs: the unscrupulous businessman Lalaji is ironically shown to see his personal *dharma* wholly in terms of what he believes is his *guna*, the nature he is endowed with, and acquiring as much wealth as possible. In the third novel in the group, the concept of *asrama*, particularly that of householdership affords comic and ironic potential as Prem struggles to lead the good life and discovers he must concern himself with money, self-preservation and utilitarian attitudes.

In the second group of novels the conflict of reconciling personal, social and religious aims and duties leads to more serious consequences.

In these stories of domestic division and marital disharmony whilst social and traditional values of filial piety and family duty are important, there is now a new emphasis on personal fulfilment of a spiritual nature. *Atmansiddhi*, of varying degrees of spiritual success exist even in the materialism and rapacity of the Delhi Jhabvala creates. In Esmond in India, ironic exposure of the manners and pretensions of upper and middle-class Indians is enhanced by the *dharma* concept. In Get Ready for Battle, the humorous society remains undisplaced as Jhabvala focuses her irony on those who strive for material gain despite the exhortation in the *Gita* (and the novel's title) to prepare for battle and action without regard for the fruits or benefits of the action. In A Backward Place, egoless action and the *bhakti* ideal are important as various protagonists (including Westerners) are shown in differing degrees of surrender and acceptance of faith and of India.

In all these novels there are protagonists who are caring, spiritual and sensitive to man's needs and the beauties of nature. They are eirons and sincere seekers yet unable to effect any great change in the humorous society. Sometimes, like the younger eirons, an uneasy truce with the alazons is made by a partial cutting of links with the humorous society. The existence of these eirons, who are both spiritual and pragmatic, emphasizes a recurrent image of India other than the backward land of awful contradictions. This is that of India as a place where the sky speaks and experiences can be refining and redeeming. The short story that will be referred to, "The Old Lady" (1963) (LBLF: 7-20), captures the unique strength of the spiritually-aware protagonists of the comic ironies and at the same time their inability to effect spiritual happiness for those they love. An exception is the old woman Bhuaji in A Backward Place whose presence sustains and strengthens Judy to place her trust in India and begin a new life with her family in Bombay. The open-endedness of these novels - they end with protagonists about to embark on a crucial

change or stage in their life - and the suggestion of troubled times ahead reflect the ironist's stand towards the rule of the humorous society.

In these first two groups of novels Jhabvala's irony is tempered with tolerance and affectionate understanding. There is sharp, satiric exposure of the Delhi elite and do-gooders balanced with an ironic viewpoint that sees her protagonists as part of a comic world - absurd rather than wicked, feeling rivalry rather than the hatred and suspicion that characterize tragedy. The ironic tone is generally sharp, but tolerant as we are cued-in to the characters she approves and those she is critical of. She builds up alazony or 'confident unawareness' of her characters through verbal irony in which they betray their hypocrisy. obsession or foolishness. A habit of recording a protagonist's thoughts by combining a detached objective narrative voice with the particular protagonist's speaking voice, often endears to us the most deluded and foolish of braggards and imposters. Stylistic placing of words, phrases or sentences as afterthought, or for narrative emphasis, is a common technique.

In The Nature of Passion, for example, Mataji's (Lalaji's wife) fondness for her daughter-in-law Shanta, rests on the fact that Shanta is respectful and submissive, quietly accepting all the acrimony directed at her own mother, and family by her mother-in-law's family. The passage that deals with this, recounts in a narrative that echoes Mataji's thoughts, Shanta's early distress and her subsequent submissiveness. It begins with 'She really was fond of the girl' and concludes with 'She was a very good girl' (NP: 84). With these two short and simple sentences the ironic narrator undercuts the magnanimity and affection Mataji prides herself on, illustrating the alazon's easy claim of superiority and rights as mother-in-law and her lack of appreciation of Shanta's real worth.

Hindu and muted Platonic ideals occur in the more serious ironies of Jhabvala's last phase in India. In A New Dominion and Heat and Dust the

concept of *bhakti* or devotion is again important, providing ironic foil for Jhabvala's examination of the craving of the human soul for inner fulfilment often from spiritual knowledge. Ideals of family *dharma* and social commitments give way to self and spiritual fulfilment for the later protagonists who cut themselves off from family ties and obligations. Behind the quests for transcendence, for something 'better', Jhabvala highlights the very profane nature of the relationships that develop between the Western questers and those in whom they place their faith. For the most part Eros and spiritual transcendence are irreconcilable.

The ironic tone shifts as the comic world is gradually taken over by the ironic specifically of Frye's later phases of the ironic mythos. The irony of the domestic novels (particularly the first three novels) is characterized by an indulgent humour, one that does not condemn but rather teases and cajoles into self-recognition. It is the ironic viewpoint of an outsider still able to see the delights of India. With the downward movement of the cycle of the foreigner's attitude to India, the themes of rootlessness and isolation begin and the ironic tone shifts.

The narrative stance is impersonal and detached with both novels largely written in the first person. In Heat and Dust, this consists of Ms. Rivers' journal entries of her experiences in India and a narrative of the events of 1923 filtered through Ms. Rivers' imaginative reconstruction of her step-grandmother Olivia's love affair with the Nawab. In A New Dominion the story unfolds in short chapters (with childlike picture-book titles) in the form of letters written by Lee, her journal entries and letters written by Raymond, the English visitor to India. The remaining sections of the narrative are in a bare, objective prose style that achieves ironic effect mainly from what is left unsaid. This, and Lee's letters and journal entries consisting of either unelaborated and undeveloped thoughts, or effusive fascination over the *guru*, Swamiji, suggest self-deception and wilful blindness on the protagonist's part and

a narrative voice which refuses to guide the reader and neither condemns nor praises. In the dark world of fourth-phase irony to which these two novels belong, we glimpse 'the humanity of its heroes', as the victim figures make their choices and are overcome by the 'destructive element' (AC: 237).

As mentioned earlier, In Search of Love and Beauty is best seen as a second-phase satire and should logically be placed together with the group of early ironies that include Esmond in India. Its Platonic frame of reference however makes it more fitting that it should belong to a separate grouping of the later Western novels, an early satiric prelude to the dark irony of Three Continents. The Platonic search for Love and Beauty occupies the thoughts and energies of the Western protagonists of In Search of Love and Beauty and Three Continents. Fluid references to Greek myth and imagery enhance the Platonic framework that off-sets the unending ritual of apathetic relationships entered into by failed seekers of Wisdom, like Lee in A New Dominion, unable to go beyond lower Eros. The more covert irony of the preceding group continues in these novels for the ironic viewpoint is influenced by a tendency to see in things 'a fundamental and irremediable absurdity'.

In In Search of Love and Beauty, the narrative tone is at times detached, or familiar, even droll. The constant shifts of time intensify the sense of distance and detachment created as if we are watching the passionate strivings of the protagonists behind glass. Here as in A New Dominion and Heat and Dust the narrative-voice is like the eiron of the old Greek definition, 'evasive and non-committal, concealing his enmities, ... never giving a straight answer' (Muecke 1970: 15). The narrative-voice pretends neutrality and 'dissembles' in order to be understood. The distancing accentuates the novels' concern to show man's essential and terrifying loneliness. The irony is withheld 'only in the weak sense that it is not explicit or not meant to be immediately apprehensible' (Muecke

1970: 35). Displacement, isolation and loneliness are experiences close to Jhabvala's personal history; it is perhaps only in an 'eironic' narrative that she can distance herself from her fiction and resist the involvement. In A New Dominion and In Search of Love and Beauty there are parts in which the narrative voice adopts a non-neutral stance to undermine not just the quest for Love and Beauty but the very basis of the moral framework itself. These are parts of the overall ironic narrative of a writer whose fiction portrays the dialectics of a love-hate relationship with India and indeed with America and for whom the novel is an exercise in detachment and honesty as well as a 'process of integration' (Jhabvala quoted in Sucher 1989: 206).

In Three Continents, the eiron-like narrative voice is absent but the modern ironist dissembles through the alternately astute yet naive, intelligent yet credulous flawed narrator Harriet Wishwell. As chronicler whose narrative cannot fully articulate the nature of her feelings towards Crishi, Harriet is the 'living' example of the hopelessness of a realization of Platonic ideals in the face of an utterly alien and diabolical world. Here, more strongly than with A New Dominion, the reader discerns the gap between the ideals posited by the framework and the strivings of the protagonists. In Phaedrus, Plato has Socrates talk of the human souls following the gods in the ascent to the abode 'of the reality with which true knowledge is concerned ... apprehensible only by intellect which is the pilot of the soul', the movement in short, towards the Form of Beauty in The Symposium (PHA: 52; SYM: 94). The description of the two groups of souls whose unruly horses impair or prevent their vision of reality seems a fitting description of what Jhabvala's ironic narrative reveals of her Platonic protagonists:

> A second class sometimes rises and sometimes sinks, and owing to the restiveness of its horses sees part, but not the whole. The rest, in spite of their unanimous striving to reach the upper world, fail to do so, and are carried round beneath the surface, trampling and jostling one another, each eager to

> outstrip its neighbour. Great is the confusion and struggle and sweat, and many souls are lamed and many have their wings all broken through the feebleness of their charioteers; finally, for all their toil, they depart without achieving initiation into the vision of reality, and feed henceforth upon mere opinion.
>
> (PHA: 53)

In charting or anatomizing the huge body of literature, Frye highlights the continuity of forms and images across widely different cultures and times, giving less attention to analyses of specific texts. The outward movement of Frye's archetypal approach, its looking outward to wider levels of correspondence and analogies between texts can draw the critic away from the text itself. In looking at Jhabvala's irony from an integration of Frye's archetypal, associative approach and the framework of religious and traditional norms and philosophical ideas, this study looks closely at ironic play in the text whilst appreciating the continuity of forms and images across a wide range of novels from India of 1923 to New York of the 1980s. Frye's schema and Hindu and Platonic ideals provide a basis for a unity of approach and content, a criterion of value for any school of critical thought.

PART TWO: THE NOVELS

CHAPTER THREE

THE IRONIC COMEDIES: TO WHOM SHE WILL, THE NATURE OF PASSION, THE HOUSEHOLDER

Introduction

Written between 1955 and 1960, Jhabvala's comedies are products of the writer's early joyous immersion in India. They are stories that revolve round young love, betrothals and arranged marriages within the context of conflict between young and old, modern and traditional, in middle- and upper-class Delhi families. The plot and characterisation of these novels portray the conservatism of an older generation which is nevertheless more affected by Western ideas than it is willing to admit. At the same time the comedies highlight the desire for escape from tradition and restrictions by a younger generation more imbued with tradition that its members realize. The differences that arise between the two generations are set against the larger background of rapid social, political and economic changes in post-Independence India; indeed the re-establishment of family harmony in these novels is part of the adaptations and readjustments to traditions and social norms in the face of more immediate and material concerns (Bazaz 1975). Despite the irony that distinguishes Jhabvala's portrayal of the manners of the upper middle-class, these novels share a common portrayal of the possibility of progressive elements in society even though the conservative boundaries are maintained.

Ironic features in the three novels are best seen by applying Frye's categorisation of the mythos of comedy. The novels belong to a lesser or greater extent to Frye's first phase comedy, which is comedy at its most ironic, 'the one in which a humorous society triumphs or remains undefeated'. It is that phase of comedy which 'represents what Renaissance critics called *speculum conseutudinis*, the way of the world, cosi fan tutte' (AC: 177-178). The three novels reflect the two chief

features of first phase comedy: first a return of the younger or dissenting group, usually alert, intelligent eiron figures who develop understanding and self-awareness, to the fold of the older generation; second, the highlighting of the various obsessions of the humours, the various alazon impostors and deceivers, who make up the humorous society.

The general trend in these novels is that of comedy, in which the possibility of integration of young and old, or romantic love and traditional arrangements for marriage, of individual and social needs, is depicted. In To Whom She Will Hari Sahni's romantic attachment to Amrita ends with the mutual attraction and arranged betrothal between him and Sushila, a fellow Punjabi. Amrita in To Whom She Will and Nimmi in The Nature of Passion marry young men they are attracted to and who are also the eventual choice of their elders. In The Householder, love between Prem and Indu, united in an arranged marriage, develops and mellows in the process of Prem's adjusting to the social duties of husband and provider. What comes under ironic scrutiny is the strength and power of the older humorous society even as it persists in its collective delusions and fabrications, and the degree of adaptation required of the younger, generally more enlightened, elements to fit in within the conservative boundaries. Humours who have social prestige and power and in the case of To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion, parental rights, exert their influence over the younger group. In The Nature of Passion, Lalaji is less a blocking character than comedy's humour whose obsession is seen to infect all his family members. In To Whom She Will, the good sense of the Amrita - Krishna Sen love (and expected marriage) makes it the most hopeful and positive of the three novels for in their coming together the older family members are only marginally the cause; there is the implication that Amrita and Krishna's marriage will rise beyond what the older members require or think desirable for their status and self-

preservation. Frye writes that the action of comedy is a movement from law to liberty:

> In the law there is an element of ritual bondage which is abolished, and an element of habit or convention which is fulfilled. The intolerable qualities of the *senex* represent the former and compromise with him the latter in the evolution of the comic *nomos*.
>
> (AC: 181)

Of the three novels To Whom She Will shows this best in the way we see the alazons' power diminished by the positive good sense of the young people and the compromises with habit and convention in the acceptance by all quarters of the suitability of their 'arranged' union.

Yet the harmoniousness is not without ironic counterpoint for the older society remains undisplaced. This strength and power of the traditionalists and their use (and abuse) of norms and ritual is stronger in The Nature of Passion and The Householder. In these two novels the movement from law to liberty is even more muted. Of the three novels it is in The Nature of Passion that the hold of the older society is strongest in the sense that accord between the two groups is least problematic. The main protagonist is the businessman Lalaji Dass Verma and his eiron-like qualities highlight the shortcomings of the other more selfish members of his family including the romantic, pampered daughter Nimmi. Like Hari Sahni in To Whom She Will whose integration with the older society is complete and joyful, Nimmi falls *out* of love with Pheroze Bhatliwala, a Parsi, and *in* love with a rich fellow Punjabi, Kuku, proving her a true daughter of Lalaji's household and of the materialistic, humorous society. On the whole, however, as novels about contemporary Delhi life, the three novels portray the conflict that arises from two groups with differing attitudes, priorities and degrees of modernisation, and also the accord that is achieved from a common heritage of religious norms and traditions handed down and interiorized. In her study of the Hindu woman, Cormack (1961: vii-viii) emphasises the inteoriorization of

concepts and precepts which dilutes rebelliousness and brings about happy compromises, reconciliation and integration. In To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion, Amrita and Nimmi are brought back from rebelliousness and conflict, into the fold of family approval and affections because like true dutiful daughters they will eventually marry young men arranged for them, from their own class and community. In The Householder Prem settles down to his second year of married life with a more realistic perspective on the financial and emotional strains of being a perfect householder. It is the nature of this integration, one based on the ironic continuance of distinctions of class, status and wealth, of community animosities and one-upmanship, that Jhabvala exploits for maximum effect through the use of the traditional framework.

Set up through titles, epigraphs and allusions, the philosophical framework enhances the workings of Jhabvala's ironical wit for it serves as a frame of reference for the portrayal of the misuse and abuse of traditional and religious ideals and standards by the humorous society. The titles, all directly related to traditional texts, alert us to the main thematic concerns of each novel and the related aspects of the framework. The philosophical framework is least developed in To Whom She Will, her first novel. The expression 'To Whom She Will' is from a folktale from the *Panchatantra*, a collection of animal fables, 'a book of wise conduct in life'. The title is lifted from a story that deals specifically with the importance of arranging betrothals for girls of marriageable age to partners from like community and caste. 'The Nature of Passion' and 'The Householder' are specific references to religious concepts. In The Nature of Passion the epigraph is taken from the *Bhagavad Gita*, a reference to the three *guna*, or natures of man. Householdership is the second stage or *asrama* in a man's life, with its own social and spiritual commitments. Whilst different aspects of the framework operate for different novels - in To Whom She Will, marriage

traditions, filial duty and the feminine ideal; religious duty and one's *guna* in The Nature of Passion and the responsibilities of upholding the householder stage of life in the third novel - the central unifying philosophical concern is with *dharma*, a person's ordained religious and worldly duties. It is the ironic contradictions of fulfilling personal, religious and social commitments that Jhabvala exploits in her depiction of the humorous society. In the first novel the thematic concerns and Jhabvala's ironic view are developed against a backdrop of Hindu folklore and social tradition; that of The Nature of Passion and The Householder are developed on a framework more specifically built on religious philosophy - a reflection of the author's increased exposure to Indian life and Hindu thought.

Jhabvala focuses as much on the young sentimental protagonists as she does on the older 'blockers' or obstructors to a redeemed society. Examples of irony of events and situation which reveal a reality behind an appearance are prominent in these early works. However, examples of verbal irony, particularly of self-betrayal and of simple incongruity are also important (Muecke 1969: 100-112). One of Jhabvala's ironic strategies is to express a character's thought in a fusion of words that is partly the ironic narrative voice and that of the victim herself. It is in relation to these types of narrative strategies that Jhabvala's irony will be examined.

The comedy arises from the portrayal of the intense, short-lived romances of the young lovers of To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion, and in The Householder, of Prem and Indu's early adjustments to married life and Prem's struggles to prove himself a worthy family man. There is also comedy in the young protagonists' interaction with the alazon elders who manipulate and manoeuvre to arrange betrothals, hasten marriage, check wrong choices or maintain their authority.

In the total mythos of comedy the hero's society restores the social standards of a golden age in the past before the action of the play or novel begins. Stable and harmonious order is again established after the disruptions caused by 'folly, obsession, forgetfulness, "pride and prejudice"' (AC: 171). However in Jhabvala's ironic comedies of Indian life, the young protagonists enjoy only limited success, the disruptive society 'remains undefeated', and stability and harmony is achieved only with the eirons' pragmatic acceptance of its incongruities. In these early comedies the humorous society restricts the growth of a fully redeemed society, keeping it 'swaddled and smothered' by hypocritical insistence on 'habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law' and the power claimed by age and wealth (AC: 169; 185). The youthful eirons work with limited freedom and are themselves part of the larger context of changes within India. Yet the pervasive tone of the early comedies, particularly to To Whom She Will is one of hope and promise arising from portrayals of family love, loyalty and tolerance. There is a feel in these novels of tradition being worked out anew and recreated by the activity of its followers (Radhakrishnan 1980: 17).

Despite the stronger ironic viewpoint in The Nature of Passion and The Householder where the humorous society triumphs almost uncontested, the ironic comedies portray a world of absurd, ridiculous alazons, not evil manipulators suggestive of a demonic world associated with nightmare, bondage and pain (AC: 178; 147). On the whole, the instances of irony are mainly concerned with the specific or particular: deluded alazons, a hypocrite, an obsession, a preoccupation with honour and prestige (Muecke 1969: 119-120). Jhabvala's tone is compassionate in that even for her ironic portrayals of alazons the choice of vocabulary, the narrational stance and the imagery are means by which she endears many of the characters to us. Two good examples are Lalaji of The Nature of Passion and Prem in The Householder. Ironic exposure of Lalaji's unscrupulousness

and Prem's self-conscious posturings as married man is tempered by constant references to their generosity of spirit and capacity for love. In the resolutions of these novels there are early signs of the darker perspectives of general irony that is the view of an aberrant world where we are all victims of impossible situations (Muecke 1969: 120-125). At the conclusion of the novels when Jhabvala is concerned to show the ambiguous nature of the harmony achieved and the strength of the humorous society, the 'eironic' narrative 'dissembles' and refuses to take sides, objectively exposing the incongruities of human behaviour. This is most evident in The Nature of Passion. The world of the ironic comedies is an unredeemed one in which eirons make various adjustments and capitulations to alazons who in turn adapt, and exploit but rarely live by the traditional and religious ideals they proclaim. The tolerance on the part of author and protagonists themselves in these comedies is however unmistakable. This, and the portrayal of love and familial togetherness distinguish these early novels from the subsequent group of comic ironies.

To Whom She Will (1955)

The plot of To Whom She Will revolves round the marriage plans for Amrita Chakravaty and Hari Sahni when their families discover that the two are romantically involved and planning to elope to England. Prema, Hari's sister, their mother and family members arrange for Hari's betrothal to Sushila Anand, a Punjabi and distantly related. Amrita's widowed mother Radha, her grandfather, the retired judge Rai Bahadur Tara Chand and her aunties Tarla and Mira strive to prevent Amrita's involvement and marriage to someone from a different community and caste and below the family's

class and social standing. Finally tradition and the elders prevail; Hari is married to Sushila amidst joyous celebration. At the end of the novel, Amrita and Krishna Sen Gupta the Bengali intellectual who lodges at her house, discover their love for each other even as Radha, unsuccessful in getting Amrita betrothed to the son of a wealthy social worker, plans for an arranged marriage between the two. Their expected marriage based on mutual choice and affection will be supported by the family because it will be a union of two young people from similar backgrounds.

The novel highlights the maturing process for Amrita whose sentimental attachment to Hari, her colleague at a New Delhi radio station, gives way to liking, respect and love for Krishna Sen. Amrita and Hari's prospective marriage partnership reflects the endurance of tradition. In the modern but highly structured society in which they live, carefully arranged betrothals based on common bonds of class and community assume greater relevance than short-lived romantic attachments. In Amrita and Krishna Sen's expected marriage there is a compromise between self-expression and compliance to tradition. The socially-approved ideals of conformity, obedience, self-control and harmony (Cormack 1961) are reflected in the happy festivities and ritual of Hari and Sushila's wedding.

Although To Whom She Will shows features that belong to the mythos of comedy it is most profitably seen as an ironic comedy. It falls most aptly within the first or most ironic phase of comedy, ironic in that the humorous society triumphs or remains undefeated (AC: 176-177). For this phase Frye cites the examples of literary works, The Alchemist and The Begger's Opera, in which the eirons, self-deprecating or plain-dealing characters (initially) uninvolved, or at enmity with the main alazons, join forces with them or are accepted back into the fold of the absurd society. First phase comedy portrays 'the way of the world;, *'Cosi fan tutte'* (AC: 177). This is seen in the way the younger protagonists bow

not so much to the irrational law of arranged marriages but to the alazons' preoccupation through apparent respect for tradition and norms, with prejudices, suspicion, status and prestige. In third phase comedy the redeemed society triumphs when an absurd or irrational law connected with a humour is broken. In the first phase comedy of To Whom She Will, after the complications are sorted out and there is comedy's happy ending for the two families (AC: 167; 44), there is still an ambivalence in the nature of the final integration. This ironic counterpoint to the comic situations of To Whom She Will is maintained throughout.

The unredeemed society flourishes in To Whom She Will and the 'sense of absurdity' that comes 'as a kind of backfire or recall after the work has been seen or read' (AC: 226) is derived from the irony directed at the 'deceiving and self-deceived' alazons and the nature of the final conformity. Irony undercuts the resolution, the muted movement from 'law to liberty', and we are alerted to the shortcomings of the humorous society. At the same time however signals, particularly in the descriptive details, show us that Amrita and Krishna Sen are far removed from their class. Personal will and individuality fit in harmoniously with family and social demands. Jhabvala speaks of her early works as 'sunny' and To Whom She Will is the happiest of the ironic comedies. Compared to the humorous society of The Nature of Passion and The Householder, that of To Whom She Will is least triumphant. The attractiveness and intelligence of Amrita and Krishna Sen suggest the beginnings of a more enlightened society.

The title of the novel provides an early indication of the traditional framework of To Whom She Will and its story of innocent young love, parental opposition, sibling rebelliousness and the establishment of harmonious relations within the family for Amrita and Hari. The source of the title is a tale called 'The Story of the Female Mouse' from a collection of animal fables called the *Panchantatra*.(1) The stories, with

different settings and assorted animal protagonists, corroborate Hindu laws governing the fulfilment of one's worldly and spiritual duties (*dharma*). The story about the female mouse is specifically concerned with norms governing the proper upbringing of girls, the arranging of suitable husbands for them, and the benefits of marrying within one's caste and kind. It tells of a girl who is transformed from a mouse and brought up by a holy couple in an *ashram*, a retreat. When the maiden reaches marriageable age the parents feel she must be married off to someone suitable:

> If she remains a maiden still
> She gives herself to whom she will
> Then marry her in tender age
> So warns the heaven - begotten sage.
>
> (quoted in Gooneratne 1983: 302-303)

After many grand suitors (the wind, the sun), and rejections on the girl's part, she is finally pleased to choose and marry the king of mice. She asks to be transformed into a mouse so that she will be able to perform 'the household duties of my new clan' (Panchatantra, [trans.] Chandiramani 1970: 153). The concept of *varnadharma*, of living one's life according to the duties of one's caste (Radhakrishnan 1980), is implicit in the tale. The story ends with the reminder that the female mouse has chosen 'a husband of her own kind' substantiating the sage's earlier thoughts on the matter.

> Enter into marriage ties and friendship
> Only with those who are, socially and financially,
> your equals.
>
> (Panchatantra, [trans.] Chandiraman 1970: 152)

Initiated readers can appreciate the appropriateness of a title from the *Panchatantra* for a novel about rebellious offspring , romantic attachments, selfish elders and final unions with partners of ones 'own kind'. Bearing in mind Jhabvala's early euphoria with the country and its

people, wanting to be an 'insider' and to 'identify fully' (Blackwell 1985: 47), it would not be unreasonable to assume that Jhabvala must have expected many of her readers to catch the significance of the title.

Even for the uninitiated reader the ironic title signals associations and references to Amrita's behaviour in relation to well-known ideals of feminine behaviour for Indian women. In resolutely wanting to marry 'whom she will', that is, continuing to see Hari despite parental opposition and secretly preparing for their elopement to England, Amrita goes against the virtues of maidenly compliance, modesty and truthfulness, virtues enshrined in Hindu law books or scriptures, the Dharmasastras[2] (The Rules of Right Conduct), the Laws of Manu,[3] as well as in countless legends, myths, written and oral folk tales (Cormack 1961). Taken out of the context of the tale where it serves to highlight the dangers of personal choice, the title appears to endorse free choice, implying a position of personal independence for the female protagonist. In reality, Amrita's choice meets with opposition from both families, hers and Hari's. Even as Amrita and Hari vow eternal love and arrange for passports and inoculations, the machinery for betrothal preliminaries, discussions, bookings and dowries are set in motion by the older society.

Amrita's second choice of 'whom she will' is Krishna Sen Gupta. That this will be a more successful choice rests not so much on the fact that they are compatible and have grown to love one another, but on the (expected) approval of the family who will see in Krishna Sen the assets of class, kind, education and prestige they hold so dear and which tradition enjoins on them.[4] The young protagonists' friendship, mutual respect and tenderness for each other are lesser considerations for her family than the preservation of honour and status for Rai Bahadur, retired judge, and his daughter Radha. For her, the switch from the eminently suitable son of Lady Ram Prasad to Krishna Sen Gupta is a simple matter, for Amrita's horoscope predicts her marriage when she is twenty to 'a

beautiful fair boy and from the best family' (TWW: 198). The union of Amrita and Krishna Sen, after the joyous discovery of their love for each other, is approved only because Amrita's choice concurs with Radha's and is an ironic vindication of the existing norms and traditional ideals governing choice of partners and marriage. This remains the central ironic fact of To Whom She Will, that which makes the comedy ironic.

The comedic staple of young against old, lovers against blockers, forms the action of To Whom She Will. The central youthful protagonist is a woman and the traditional conflict between son and father of New Greek comedy (AC: 163) becomes a clash between a daughter and her mother and grandfather who view her as self-willed and disobedient. On Hari's side there is also opposition to the romance and to Amrita (referred to as his 'memsahib') for being, ironically, unrepresentative of her class; shy, awkward, unsophisticated. In Rai Bahadur and Radha, Jhabvala develops the figures of the armchair-blocker and the active obstructionist respectively. The Rai Bahadur parallels comedy's *senex iratus*, the heavy father figure 'with his rages and threats, his obsessions and his gullibility' (AC: 172). In the Rai Bahadur's case, Jhabvala uses simple incongruity to tap the ironic comedy. The old man's image of himself as the respected, undisputed decision-maker in the family is juxtaposed with the actual limited resources he has to exert that authority. The old man is 'safe' and 'important' only in the 'reality' of his lawbooks, 'the dusty upholstery of his study' and the predictable tenor of day to day life with his faithful servants. He seeks to influence the lives of 'real round figures' of an outside world, whose 'rhythm' he cannot understand, at the weekly family lunches and occasional summonses to his study. Amrita's defiance and the grandfather's command that she continues her studies in England intensifies the existing isolation between the Rai Bahadur and his family. The liberal-minded, Anglophile is in reality the

autocratic, conservative head more worried about the family name than his granddaughter's happiness.

In the following description of the Rai Bahadur's musings the old man's thoughts are externalized in a narrative that captures his distorted sense of self-importance and his isolation:

> Here he was still what he always had been: a man of importance ... Tarla, Mira and Harish, Radha and Amrita, they believed in his judgement and followed it. His son-in-law Vazir Dayal, it was true, had always done his best to undermine his position; but then, the man was a fool and all he could put in his way were petty annoyances which the Rai Bahadur had enough dignity and self-respect, so he believed, both to despise and ignore. But Amrita's defiance - and he could only call it that - was different; that struck home deeper, penetrated right through the servants, the law books and notes, and lunch in the dining-room.
>
> (TWW: 174)

The conclusion reveals his insistence on his past social prominence and the obedience he has extracted from his daughters:

> And because things were so; because this was life and the Rai Bahadur a man of importance; because things were so, Amrita had to accept his decision and go to England.
>
> (TWW: 175)

The Rai Bahadur's misplaced pride in his liberal ways, particularly his opposition to arranged marriages is reviewed in his daughter's thoughts:

> [Mira] considered that it was the parents' duty to find suitable mates for their children....It was all very well for Papaji to say that he had not arranged his daughters' marriages:but Mataji had been there and all the aunts, and they had seen to it that suitable husbands were found. How else could she have married Harish's father? She could not have gone out to *look* for him. And Tarla too - Vazir Dayal had not just walked into the house; Various aunts had seen to it that he got there.
>
> (TWW: 180)

The Rai Bahadur's explanations to Amrita on his objections to the friendship with Hari afford examples of ironic self-betrayal as Jhabvala

points out the many limitations to his liberal attitudes. The Rai Bahadur's 'conscience' will not allow Amrita to 'bridge' the 'too wide gulf' between the two families. Yet the 'caring' grandfather's words reveal the limitations of the deluded alazon:

> If the family background had been satisfactory, I would not have unduly concerned myself over the young man's deficiencies. They are after all, *your* affair. [italics mine]
>
> (TWW: 7)

It is clear therefore that the Rai Bahadur is as much concerned with status and self importance as is Radha. In his relation with his granddaughter and indeed with the other members of the family, the Rai Bahadur exhibits the alazons' 'blind confidence' and serene unawareness of his own limitations. In pronouncing on the 'exaggerated stress' laid on the arranging of marriages the Rai Bahadur's words betray his continuing autocracy beneath a liberal front:

> I myself am not hidebound in this way; that indeed I have allowed two of my own daughters to marry outside their immediate community, and in one case quite distinctly beneath her own level of ... breeding and fortune.
>
> (TWW: 7)

To the old man, Amrita's problem threatens not only to repeat her mother's mistake but also to abuse the Rai Bahadur's open-mindedness.

With her modest home, a paying lodger, a one-servant car-less existence and a widowhood partly due to the toll of imprisonments of her revolutionary lawyer husband, Nirad Chakravathy, Radha is the living example of the woman who has married below her 'own level of .. breeding and fortune'. Although her own feelings for her husband changed even after a marriage of mutual choice, this does not stop her from arranging one for Amrita and hoping that 'Feelings could come afterwards, after marriage' (TWW: 179). Radha is the first of Jhabvala's many alazons

whose references to traditional and religious norms serve as ironical signals of the public piety of members of the humorous society. Lamenting on Krishna Sen's imminent departure for Calcutta, Radha comments:

> But it is life. All that is dear to us will go from us. That is why it says in the Gita that we must not let anything become too dear to us. We must live only in prayer.
>
> (TWW: 199)

Yet prestige and social honour are 'too dear' to Radha so that her time is spent in getting a rich, handsome 'England-returned' husband for her daughter. From Amrita, Radha expects filial behaviour and 'duty as is fitting in a daughter' (TWW: 100) yet the obedience and gracious respect she shows her own father is a front that began with her own choice of Nirad Chakravathy for a husband. In quietly arranging for Lady Ram Prasad's son, then switching to Krishna Sen as prospective husband for Amrita, Radha disobeys her father's expressed (if insincere) distaste for arranged marriages and his decision that Amrita be sent to England to study. The folly that characterizes the society of the *senex* is evident in such contradictory behaviour and in Radha's arbitrary attitudes to marriage and to the choice of partner for her daughter. Marriage can be an easy means of countering rebelliousness:

> With girls like you the only way is to marry you off at fifteen, quickly, to any respectable man who will take you.
>
> (TWW: 100)

At other times it is a special event requiring wisdom of choice for continued family prestige:

> Yes, my darling, in marriage the most important thing is that husband and wife should come from the same social class ... you cannot be happy if you marry into a family that is not so good as yours.
>
> (TWW: 200)

Unlike the mousemaid of the fable, Amrita at twenty is still unbetrothed and in danger, as far as her elders are concerned, of making a wrong choice of marriage partner with the wilful independence acquired from a lengthy education and an announcing job at a radio station. The possibility of unwise, independent choice hinted at in the *Panchantantra* is comically portrayed in the Amrita-Hari Sahni romance. Irony of situation develops as Amrita loves Hari for his 'Indianness' whilst Hari is ashamed of his lack of Western polish and admires Amrita for accomplishments over which she is embarrassed. Ashamed of the empty ostentatiousness and formal Westernized ways of her family, Amrita looks to Hari and his family in her search for 'the supreme simplicity' of the truly Indian way of life. His spontaneous, unpunctual ways charm her:

> He was definitely unpractical, so truly Indian, so unworldly, that he could not think of hard-set European things like time and clocks.
>
> (TWW: 21)

The aspects of her life which she apologizes for - her Westernized family, its affluence, her education at a convent - are the very things 'for which he loved and admired her most' (TWW: 24). Yet it is Hari's 'delightfully unpractical' ways, his preoccupation with food, films, friends, songs and being in love with the idea of love that tax Amrita severely as she prepares for their escape to England.

The Amrita-Hari relationship is an eiron-alazon one and as such, fraught with difficulties and rich in comic and ironic potential. Although Amrita reveals alazon - like aspects of lack of self-knowledge in her choice of Hari Sahni, her subsequent action reveals the resolve and practicality of a pragmatic eiron. In spite of family opposition and an uninspired Hari who has to be prodded into action and commitment, Amrita quietly perseveres despite charges of being 'undutiful' and 'wicked'. Where Amrita is clearly shown to be working towards a goal she believes

in, Hari, pliable and easy-going, incapable of individual action, is eased into both Amrita's and Prema's plans. Hari's thoughts in the midst of these complications reveal the self-deceiving way of the alazon as he attempts to reconcile his conscience and his natural inclinations. He sees his problem in terms of noble self-sacrifice, projected in images of romantic film cliche, divine lovers of myths and of popular fiction. In the example given below, the narrative captures the incongruity of Hari's image of himself (and Amrita) as helpless star-crossed romantic lovers and the barely suppressed more explicit sexual expectation when his thoughts stray to Sushila. The narrative mimicks Hari's thoughts as images from film and Prema's pulp romances jostle one another:

> Was he to go to her and say, forgive me, I cannot go with you to England, next week I am to be married? He could imagine the scene - not as between himself and Amrita, but between two plump shadowy figures with garlands round their necks sitting in a jasmine-bower; his head was bowed, she stared dry-eyed into the distance; there was silence except for his heavy sighs; then she began to sing, very low and sad, a song of sorrow and separation.
>
> (TWW: 153)

The narrative continues in a combination of the amused, ironic narrative voice over Hari's mechanical sentimentality and his own disjointed thoughts as they wrestle between faithfulness to his first love and excitement over the new one:

> His eyes now were moist with tears, and he walked along chewing his *pan* and thinking of the inevitable, the fate-ordained ending to his great love .... He was to be sacrificed in marriage and the day that should have been full of rejoicing would be the unhappiest of his life, for he would think of nothing but Amrita, the lost ... But suddenly he visualized thick black lashes lowered over coy eyes, a surge of hair falling forward over a rounded cheek ... how thin Amrita was getting, it occurred to him, she looked so thin and weak always, not like a fresh young girl should look, not like - the strength of her, the youth of her, the bursting bud, the promise; next week, and weakness flowed into his thighs as he turned the corner ....
>
> (TWW: 153)

Hari's marriage to Sushila and his integration in his elders' society conform to Frye's definition of a comedy:

> The theme of the comic is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it.
>
> (AC: 43)

When Hari is informed of plans for his betrothal to Sushila his placid response reveals not just the easy adaptability of his personality but also the strength of the norms and traditions in bringing about happy compromises and acceptance. Hari's immediate thoughts are of the many benefits of the traditional arrangement of marriages. His behaviour underscores the social approval for conformity, obedience, self-control and harmony of Indian society and the fictional world Jhabvala has created. The submissiveness Hari (and indeed Sushila) reveals is as much *cosi fan tutte*, the way of the humorous world, as is Radha's acceptance of tradition and ideals towards purely personal satisfaction and preservation of family prestige:

> He had always known that sooner or later this would come, sooner or later his family would decide that it was time for him to be married. He had always accepted the prospect with equanimity: what must be must be, and anyway it had to happen to everybody: it was life.
>
> (TWW: 94)

The strength of the humorous society lies in its ability to offer to its younger alazon Hari, marriage that promises 'Life ... practically without any readjustments' and the prospect of a 'smooth, sweet, honeyed path ahead' (TWW: 94). To the difference between Amrita and Hari's personalities is added the gulf of their backgrounds. This is revealed in examples which though comic, highlight the wide discrepancy between two worlds and differing outlooks on life, one that would have ended the relationship even without family interference. Hari's thoughts on his

future with Sushila are a humorous but nevertheless apt illustration of the lessons behind the *Panchatantra* tale:

> He would be able to eat with his fingers and burp when he wanted to (many a time had he suffered discomfort in Amrita's presence because he had not wished to offend her with a noise which was probably not taken as much for granted in her family circle as it was in his). He would be able to speak his native, racy, colloquial Punjabi and feel no embarrassment because his English was not as good as it might be.
>
> (TWW: 94)

Hari's integration provides not just comedy's harmonious togetherness for To Whom She Will but also the ironic element of the novel in its affirmation of the strength of the older society. No new society crystallizes around Hari, and the characters who obstructed the Amrita-Hari romance continue in power by providing a more suitable alternative to Amrita. Hari will eventually be absorbed into Suri's business world and Sushila into that of Prema's indulgence in romance fiction, sweetmeats and self-pity over male callousness.

The humorous society survives because it draws its strength from tradition, habit and ritual bondage (AC: 169), the wealth of its members, or merely the respect due to the supposed wisdom and experience of its members. For Hari, marriage to Sushila means harmony built on the approval of family members who have taken pains to choose the right girl for him. In return it is Hari's duty 'not to put strangers above [his] own kin and to bring sorrow into the house' (TWW: 96). Indeed it is to his sense of *dharma* that Prema appeals when he initially insists on his love for Amrita:

> Is this how you repay our love for you? Have you no shame that you break your mother's heart, and your elder sister's, by your obstinacy?
>
> (TWW: 95)

In the midst of her plans to elope with Hari to England, Amrita recognizes his built-in sense of belonging to his family and social group. She regards him as 'sweetly timid' and 'childlike' and is aware that to Hari:

> The thought of having to find work and to fend for himself alone in a strange, far-off country would be terrible ... he was used to having all his relations at the back of him, and existence without that support and security might seem impossible to him.
>
> (TWW: 107)

Hari's wedding ceremony ends the novel with comedy's customary sense of harmonious togetherness. Yet it is important to remember that the Hari-Sushila story, with its characters roughly aligned against characters of the Amrita-Krishna camp, somewhat in the manner of a Jane Austen novel, affords similar opportunities for Jhabvala's ironic exposure of the manners of a section of Delhi society, the newly-rich Punjabi business class. Behind the initial negotiations, the settlement for the booking of the groom, the hurried change of wedding dates to counteract any secret plans for Hari's escape to England, is the comic figure of Prema, Radha's counterpart. She claims to be unhappily married to an indifferent husband but manages to enjoy life reading cheap romance, eating sweetmeats and basking in the reflected glory of her husband Suri's business success. Behind the harmonious integratation of the Hari-Sushila story is the comic ironic exposure of the jealousies and one-upmanship between Prema and Radha and Prema and Mrs. Anand who flirts with Suri. The choice of Hari's bride rests on Prema's approval of Sushila just as it is her disapproval of Amrita and the class she represents that effectively ends the Amrita-Hari romance. The basis of this approval is humorously presented as we note that Prema's liking for Sushila is as motivated by self-interest as is Radha's disapproval of Hari Sahni. At the meeting between Sushila and Prema the rapport is amusingly conveyed:

> Sushila made herself at home at once and they both sprawled over the bed and ate sweets and talked about life. They had the radio on and .... Prema nodded her head as Sushila sang and they pressed hands and understood one another perfectly. They were Women together.
>
> Prema told her everything: about the complexities of a woman's life and the deep silent suffering that was her lot ... about the aching heart in the midst of splendour ... Sushila was such a sympathetic listener. She understood and she appreciated, she sighed, she said, It is Life, she said O poor, poor Prema, and sometimes she wept and then Prema wept too, and it was as if their two souls' mingled in one sorrow.
>
> (TWW: 90)

Thus the accord at the Hari-Sushila wedding is counterpointed by the way marriage negotiations are shown to be subject to the whims of the elders just as in itself the glorious celebration, as will be discussed later, acts as counterpoint to the relatively subdued integration in the Rai Bahadur household.

The union of Amrita and Krishna Sen is that extolled by 'The Story of the Female House'. Krishna Sen is not only Bengali and the son of a lawyer, he is 'England-returned' and his father was engaged in the same pre-Independence revolutionary struggle as Amrita's father. The Amrita-Krishna Sen affair is also that of two eirons standing a little apart from the ridiculous society, setting off the humours of the older society by their self-awareness, intelligence and good sense. In comedy the character of the successful hero of comedy is often left undeveloped: 'his real life begins at the end of the play, and we have to believe him to be potentially a more interesting character than he appears to be' (AC: 169). Although Krishna Sen comes across as attractive and engaging, he fits in more with comedy's stock undeveloped figure of the eiron compared to Amrita who is more fully realized. Both are however shown to be self-aware, enlightened eirons as well as being pragmatic enough to fit in with the elders' society. In these two protagonists and their relation to the unredeemed alazons is located another important focus for the comedy and irony of To Whom She Will.

Amrita's intense joy at receiving Krishna's long love letter not only emphasizes the tender love that has developed between two like people but also allows the novel to end on comedy's note of joy felt by as many people as possible (AC: 163). The promise of happiness is all the more meaningful in that in the two young people we see a balance of the traditional and the new. Their marriage is based on personal choice; yet Radha will take credit for it and rejoice in the appropriateness of her choice for her daughter. The young lovers are able to satisfy familial wishes and traditional conventions without giving up their individuality. Even in her romance with Hari, Amrita is gentle and retiring yet is resolute in working out a way to be united with him. She initiates moves but draws back from what she deems improper. For example she does not actually seek out Hari at his house but sends Krishna Sen to fetch him:

> Her feeling battered against the convention which forbade her to go herself to Hari's house; but she had not the courage to override it, and too much modesty; her training, her tradition, being too strong for her.
>
> (TWW: 80)

Both lovers are shown to have developed self-knowledge. Krishna Sen more used to 'freer', 'more experienced' women, realizes that Amrita's quiet modesty is 'a natural, a very fitting reticence' not the 'prudery' of Indian women that he used to scorn. The development from illusion to reality for Amrita is more clearly shown as we see the growth of self-knowledge leading to her transfer from an unsuitable love to a suitable one. This makes them characters who belong to comedy: the fact that this enlightenment is confined to them alone makes the comedy more ironic.

The reader is ironically prepared for the Amrita-Krishna union not just from the difference they show in their intelligence and sincerity but also in the narrative signals that highlight the inevitability of their marriage. These signals are located mainly in Radha's comments and certain of Amrita's responses to Krishna and her mother. Radha's

references to Krishna are ironic indications of a future possibility: 'You have become like a son to me'; 'You are my son, how can I bear to lose my son' (TWW: 256); 'If he leaves my house for ever, how my heart will break' (TWW: 223). The scene between mother and daughter discussing marriage partners for Amrita towards the end of the story effectively captures Amrita's love for Krishna in the initial reticence she shows to her mother's proddings and the final outburst that comes more as a surprise to Radha than to the readers:

> 'Please Mamma,' she said, very agitated, 'this you must promise me - you must never think of Krishna like that and you must never, please, I beg of you, never speak to him about - about anything like that.' She burned with shame at the thought. 'Please Mama!' she cried, 'please promise me never even to hint to him!'
>
> (TWW: 224)

Despite the promise of good sense, tolerance and individuality in Amrita and Krishna Sen, the final chapter of To Whom She Will emphasizes the fact that there is little movement from *pistis* to *gnosis*, 'from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and the older characters to a society controlled by youth and pragmatic freedom' (AC: 169). We recognize the fact that Amrita and Krishna Sen will fulfil part of comedy's features, that they will live happily or that at any rate they will get along in a relatively unhumorous and clear-sighted manner (AC: 169). But on the whole, comedy's movement from illusion to reality is absent as we note the self-satisfaction of the doubly deluded alazons: not only is the humorous society (epitomised by Radha and the Rai Bahadur) obsessed by material and selfish concerns, they are also deluded in thinking that the Amrita-Krishna Sen union vindicates their wisdom, judgement and faith in matters to do with marriage and suitable partners. Radha, to the very end, is the self-deceived and deceiving alazon. Content with her choice of Krishna Sen for Amrita after the failure to get Lady Ram Prasad's son and intuitively aware of Amrita's affection for

their lodger, Radha placates her father and unabashedly revokes her faith in tradition:

> I have never approved of these arranged marriages myself, they are very backward and not suitable to modern times.
>
> (TWW: 234)

To Whom She Will ends with two pairs of lovers, one united through family negotiation but with the advantage of acquaintance and sexual attraction; the other based on personal choice with the advantage of a three-year friendship, the growth of love and respect and the support and blessings of the family. Both unions reflect the comic-ironic tensions on which the novel rests. Though both present comedy's final harmony, they also reflect the strength of the humorous society through the maintenance of the elders' participation, opinion and approval in their affairs. The fact that this approval rests on questions of prestige, prejudice and the elders' obsessions provides the ironic aspect of the comedy.

Certain descriptive details in the conclusion of To Whom She Will emphasize Jhabvala's ironic perspective on the harmony achieved. As mentioned earlier, the joyous, noisy confusion of Hari's wedding is itself the culmination of barely-suppressed personal animosities between Prema and Mrs. Anand. It also emphasizes by comparison, the less joyous integration of the parallel story of the Rai Bahadur household:

> Suddenly they heard from the main road the sound of a band. It came to them filtered through still night air, a blatant joy very remote from their own dark garden with the old trees.
>
> (TWW: 234)

There is a sense of decay and remoteness as the older members sit in the dark surrounded by old trees. When we see Amrita she is significantly separate from her family in the garden of her home where a 'cool breeze flutter[s] her sari' and she plucks a flower for her hair. Whilst Hari's wedding procession and Amrita's reading of Krishna's letter is associated

with light, excitement, and laughter, the small group of people in the Rai Bahadur garden is associated with age and darkness. It recalls an earlier scene when the same people are sitting together and emphasizes the unchanging nature of the humorous society caught up in its self-righteous sufficiency:

> After dinner ... they all sat out in the garden.
> .....
> The night was very hot ... and all of them felt their age. The heat clung to them, exhausted them ... Not a breath of wind stirred in the trees. A sickening scent of night-flowers rose from the bushes and spread itself like a pall. The summers of centuries seemed to be brooding over the old garden.
>
> (TWW: 58)

The shifts in scene from Hari's wedding procession, to the group in the dark garden, to Amrita in her garden and to Hari's marriage rites emphasize the divisions that exist between these groups of people: between Amrita and the others and the gulf that separates the Rai Bahadurs and Tarla Mathurs from the Sahnis, and Anands of Delhi. The central ideal of the tale of the female-mouse, carrying out of one's duties according to one's caste and station in life and therefore of marriage within one's community, is reduced in modern day Delhi, to questions of dowry, prestige, prejudice and animosities. It is these differences that dictate the separate actions of Radha and Prema to seek new partners for their young people and to cloak them in acceptable platitude:

> 'When two families, honourable and respectable, come together' ... 'all things will be settled'.
>
> (TWW: 142)

The truth of the matter is that Prema and Radha are determined to see that the two families do not 'come together'.

Jhabvala's first novel is very much a product of her happy early years in India. It combines the newcomer's accommodating acceptance of

the benefits in India of arranged marriages with the Westerner's ironic perception of the discrepancies that can occur when traditional ideals are subject to purely material and personal ends. A folktale provides a loose framework to highlight the ironic comedy of marriage negotiations between two families, the continued divisions of class, background and privilege and unhappy marriages despite the preoccupations with right choices and arranged betrothals. It is with the subsequent comedies that a more developed philosophical framework is utilized for irony. Apart from being Jhabvala's first novel, To Whom She Will has the distinction of being the happiest of Jhabvala's ironic comedies, it is, as she says, 'very upbeat and joyous and just all sunshine' (Mooney 1977: 48) with a pervasive sense of family love and togetherness. The author's irony focuses on absurdities and foolishness motivated by concern for family well-being rather than on wilful acts of deception and exploitation.

The Nature of Passion (1956)

In To Whom She Will, romantic love and parental manipulations to secure good marriages for their children are subject to gentle ironic scrutiny. This is continued in The Nature of Passion although the ironic tone is darker. Young love is featured in the romance between Nimmi Verma for Pheroze Bhatliwala, her Parsi boyfriend; the emphasis however is on the obsession of the Punjabi businessman Lalaji Das Verma for making money and partly related to this, his love for his family especially his youngest daughter Nimmi. The story revolves around family relations in Lalaji's household and Lalaji's business interests as one of Delhi's most successful businessman. How Lalaji resolves inter-related family and business problems forms the story of The Nature of Passion. The main domestic problem concerns Nimmi's romance with Pheroze and the dangers of

her too-independent life to her future in the marriage market. When family honour and Nimmi's reputation are threatened, Lalaji reluctantly agrees to her betrothal to Kuku, the son of another businessman Amar Nath and a boy Nimmi secretly likes. Lalaji's other problems involve conflict with his sons. Om his eldest son who works for him, thinks Lalaji is too stingy and dictatorial. Lalaji is reluctant to allow his son Viddi to go overseas; Chandra, who has had an overseas education, sees association with his unscrupulous businessman father a threat to his career as a gazetted government official. Lalaji is also involved in a corruption case concerning a government officer. Exposure is imminent unless he obtains the help of his disapproving son Chandra, in the removal of an incriminating letter from a government file in Chandra's possession.

The Nature of Passion has features that parallel the plot structure of Greek New Comedy (AC: 163-164). There is parental opposition to the Nimmi-Pheroze romance (when it is eventually known). Nimmi's independent ways threaten the good name of her family for rumours of her activities can easily circulate to families with eligible sons. Her association with Pheroze Bhathiwala is particularly dangerous for he is a Parsi, a community descended from the Persians, modern and business-oriented and as such rivals of the Punjabi business community. Even the Nimmi-Kuku betrothal is initially opposed by Lalaji who wants to hold on to his favourite daughter for a little longer. Comedy's obligatory party or festive ritual occurs in the novel's prenuptial picnic where the younger protagonists are in harmony with the older society. The society of the senex triumphs in the happiness Lalaji feels as he sees Nimmi and Kuku mutually attracted to each other and is surrounded by the members of three families linked by marriage and business ties. Apart from the alazons of the humorous society, there are also comedy's buffoons (bomolochoi) whose function is to increase the mood of festivity (AC: 175). Viddi's arty friends, Bahwa, Zahir-ud-din and Tivari correspond roughly to the oldest

type of buffoon, the parasite, in their efforts to make more money through association with Viddi and the hoped-for patronage of Lalaji.

Much of the comedy of The Nature of Passion is derived from the nuances and idiosyncrasies of attitude, behaviour, gesture and speech of the middle-class life portrayed. There is tolerant, comic irony in the suppressed animosities between the women of Lalaji's household and that of Om's relatives by marriage where grievances and slights 'itched under a surface of sweet harmoniousness' (NP: 23). Irony blends with comedy in the verbal sparring between Mataji (helped by Phupji) and Shanta's mother. Amidst the elaborate courtesies, perfectly-timed and thinly-veiled attacks on the waywardness of Lalaji's children Mataji learns of her childrens' activities and galvanises Lalaji into action (NP: 85-90). Comic situations also arise from Nimmi's first (and last) romance as when her moonlight visit to the Kutb Minar with Pheroze consists of the latter's uninspired comments on cars and wilted jasmines and Nimmi herself is moved to remember nothing more romantic in poetry than 'I galloped, Dirk galloped, we galloped all three (NP: 103-105).

There is also Viddi's short-lived disillusionment with being the youngest son in a rich family and his association with the artistic life of Delhi. There is comedy in Viddi's conflicting ambitions to be both an intellectual and a free-spending, popular patron of the Rendezvous Restaurant, and comic insight into the mercenary motivations behind the aesthetic pursuits of the poor, untalented playwright, producer and actor Bahwa, the artist Zahir-ud-din and the all-purpose Tivari. The comedy that arises from the examples given above balances off the ironic viewpoint in The Nature of Passion which is darker than that of To Whom She Will.

The Nature of Passion is the most darkly ironic of Jhabvala's comedies for it shows the more complete triumph of the humorous society. As a comedy of the first phase the comic elements are subject to ironic

counterpoint to portray the dominance and strength of a humorous society characterized by the rule, power and priorities of alazons. 'The way of the world' is seen in the way rebellious offsprings of the Lalaji household eventually return to the fold united in a common concern with the materially good life. The Nimmi-Pheroze romance is an adolescent flirtation that apes the modern, grown-up world of affluent Delhi: of clubs, dancing, dressing-up and showing off. That Nimmi is such an adept at this new game marks her as a true daughter of the society obsessed with materialism. Although we learn of the mutual attraction between Nimmi and Kuku, this happy turn of events is ironically undercut by the fact that the Nimmi-Kuku betrothal has a great deal to do with family prestige and money. Indeed the twist that brings the two 'lovers' together comes in the form of a family outcry against the secret romance and a hastily-agreed promise of marriage before the accompanying offer of a 25-lakh contract is withdrawn. The integration at the end when the three families celebrate the approaching nuptials is an affirmation of the young people's identification of interests and priorities with those of the humorous society. The younger protagonists are seen to accept and submit to the unredeemed society and the delusions it perpetrates. The absence of Chandra and Kanta from the festivities marks not comedy's expulsion of disagreeable elements from the harmonious integration (AC: 175-176) but signals the continuing strength of the alazons' society with Chandra and Kanta's brand of worldliness and egotism. The strong animosity between the womenfolk of Lalaji and Dev Raj's households is only temporarily halted as Mataji sees a possible ally in Kuku's mother:

> Probably Amar Nath's wife would come to share their opinion of Shanta's mother.
>
> (NP: 190)

Lalaji is Frye's 'humour', the character with prestige and power, dominated by 'a ruling passion' (AC: 169). He expresses a state of

'ritual bondage', shown not only in the way the obsession is repeated throughout the novel (AC: 168) but in the way Lalaji's children take up their father's humour. Thus the focus of the humorous society and Jhabvala's irony is Lalaji's twin obsessions with money and profit-making on the one hand, and with providing the best, in money terms, for his children especially his daughter Nimmi. On these related obsessions rests an important situational irony in that Lalaji, the unscrupulous, wheeling-dealing property developer is also the most traditional member of the family, simple and unostentatious in his personal ways, a loving, fiercely-protective father, and a doting, indulgent grandfather. Yet another ironic situation arises in the fact that in wanting to provide the best for his family, Lalaji is criticized for the measures he takes to realize this: he is seen as autocratic and stingy by Om his eldest son, gross and materialistic by his son Chandra and wife Kanta and his youngest son Viddi. His wife and sister Phupji consider him neglectful of spiritual and parental duties for being so concerned with riches and for failing to 'settle' Nimmi in marriage.

Lalaji's preoccupation with business, money making and the rewards of this in terms of prestige, marks him as a man with 'the nature of passion'. Jhabvala's ironic wit operates within the framework of the religious concept of *guna* or inherent nature, and the related, imperative for all Hindus no matter what their guna, for egoless action, without regard for the fruits of action. The extent of Lalaji's ability to rise above his nature of passion, and the influence of *rajas*, is examined in the light of his own perception of his duties as father and provider. In highlighting Lalaji's weaknesses and rationalizations, his generosity and love are also discerned particularly with the emphasis on the pervasive materialism of his family members who in many respects are more strongly tainted by *rajas* than Lalaji himself. As first-phase comedy in which the humorous society remains undefeated, we see in The Nature of Passion the

triumph of the worldly desires and values of the society Lalaji belongs to and has partly helped to build up. Jhabvala defines the ironic perimeters of her comedy by showing the obsessions of the humorous society as being perpetuated by excuses and rationalizations drawn from religion and religious ideals. This provides the ironic undercutting for comedy's resolutions in the novel: Lalaji's joy at fulfilling his fatherly duties, the childrens' obedience to the elders' wishes and the overall harmony and togetherness between young and old.

The philosophical frame is initiated in the preface to the novel. The extract, accompanied by explanatory notes by one of Indian's foremost philosophers,(5) is from verse seven of the Fourteenth Teaching, 'The Trials of Nature's Qualities', in which the God Krishna explains to the warrior Arjuna the three qualities (*guna*) inherent in Nature and in all men: *sattvas* (lucidity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (dark inertia). Krishna goes on to warn Arjuna of the dangers of *rajas*:

> When passion increases, Arjuna,
> Greed and activity,
> involvement in actions,
> disquiet, and longing arise.
>
> .....
>
> The fruit of good conduct
> is pure and untainted they say
> but suffering is the fruit of passion
> Ignorance the fruit of dark inertia.
>
> (BG: 14, V12, p. 122; V16, p. 123)

The lesson on the *guna* and the dangers of *rajas* unregulated by dharma is related to the ideal of the *Bhagavad Gita* mentioned in its earlier Teachings and repeated throughout the text:

> Be intent on action,
> not on the fruits of actions;
> avoid attraction to the fruits
> and attachments to inaction!
>
> Perform actions firm in discipline,
> relinquishing attachment,

> be impartial to failure and success -
> this equanimity is called discipline.
>
> (BG: 2, V47-48, p. 36)

The 'wandering mind' of the man ruled by *rajas* makes it extremely difficult for the man of passion to reach the spiritual ideal as stated in the *Gita*. The man of passion is constantly preoccupied by 'activities tainted by selfish desire' and attachment to life's worldly benefits. Thus Lalaji is not only the 'humour' of traditional comedy but also the Hindu equivalent in the man controlled by passion.(6)

Lalaji acknowledges the wisdom of the scriptures and the central injunction of the Gita to be 'pure, withdrawn, detached', yet turns to thoughts of religion and respects his clerk Sohan Lal's serenity and detachment only at times of stress (NP: 94, 175). Lalaji's interpretation of the religious call for the subjugation of the self and to be 'serene-minded' and 'ever undisturbed in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, as well as in honour and dishonour' (NP: 176), is typically in terms of money:

> 'a wise man is indifferent whether he earns a salary of 75 rupees or 750 or 7,500 a month.
>
> (NP: 176)

Sohan Lal's serenity is envied but conveniently rationalized again in terms of the little material wealth he has:

> [It] was easy to be serene and withdrawn on only seventy-five rupees a month. Easy ... to be without attachment if one had nothing to which to attach oneself. If a man had no prospect of ever earning 7,500 rupees a month, he could say without pain that a wise man is indifferent whether he earns a salary of 75 rupees or 750 or 7,500 a month.
>
> (NP: 177)

Lalaji takes comfort from his constant pursuit of material gain by seeing it as the fulfilling of personal and spiritual dharma. Sohan Lal's quote

from the Gita on one's nature and the performance of duty is interpreted in Lalaji's individualistic way:

> 'Man attains perfection,' [Sohan Lal] had quoted, 'being engaged in his own duty. He who does the duty born of his own nature incurs no sin.' This information had been very interesting to Lalaji, for he had construed from it that it was not the desire for money or for power that had driven him on, but the nature with which he had been born.
>
> (NP: 176-177)

The way Lalaji convinces himself that he reconciles nature and *dharma* is seen in a narrative that presents his thoughts in the form of various conclusions which are followed by further substantiation so that the thoughts progressively lead to the self-congratulatory climax of the final statement:

> He had been endowed with the nature of a rich man, this he clearly understood: hence it had been his duty to *make* himself a rich man. In the pursuit of wealth he had only been following the path of his duty; he had done as God meant him to do, he had done well.
>
> (NP: 177)

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Krishna* constantly reminds Arjuna of the need to transcend the self and devote all right action to him:

> One who serves me faithfully
> with discipline of devotion
> transcends the qualities of nature
> and shares in the infinite spirit.
>
> (BG: 14, V26, p. 124)

Family disharmony, business problems, a sense of imperfection and sinfulness dog the man who is too busy fulfilling his nature in the pursuit of wealth to concentrate 'only on spiritual things'. Serenity eludes the man who earns too much to be 'withdrawn and unattached'. Caught up in the 'midst of life, of activity' Lalaji cannot escape what Krishna calls 'the bondage of action'. He is one of the *Gitas*

'irresolute' and 'undiscerning' men who has not attained lucidity, but is instead caught in 'the swamps of delusion' (BG: 2, V52, p. 26). Lalaji, in remaining true to his business values, deludes himself on the irrelevance of accepted standards of morality. A zealous Deputy Minister's efforts in uncovering the 'T-corruption case' is to Lalaji 'an offensive', 'stirring up untold trouble for respectable businessmen' like him (NP: 43). In another example of the irony of self-betrayal of the 'undiscerning' man of *rajas*, Lalaji voices his opinion on the meaning of corruption:

> Bribery and corruption! These were foreign words it seemed to him, and the ideas behind them were also foreign. Here in India, he thought, one did not know such words. Giving presents and gratifications to Government officers was an indispensable courtesy and a respectable,civilized way of carrying on business.
>
> (NP: 43)

As a family man with three unmarried children, it is natural and right that Lalaji's aim in life should be that of *artha* or wealth. *Artha*, the goal of material possessions and physical comfort, is one of the four goals or *purusharthas* of life, the other three being *dharma*, the goal of righteousness; *kama* of hedonic satisfactions and finally *moksha*, the goal of release, liberation and salvation (Organ 1974: 195). Lalaji's problem, despite the legitimacy of the goal of material wealth and the self-given assurance that his actions are duties in keeping with his nature, is summed up in Radhakrishnan's words:

> While the pursuit of wealth and happiness is a legitimate human aspiration, they should be gained in ways of righteousness (*dharma*), if they are to lead ultimately to the spiritual freedom of man (*moksa*). Each one of these ends requires ethical discipline. Freedom can be obtained through bonds of discipline and surrender of personal inclination. To secure the freedom to acquire and to enjoy we have to limit ourselves and bind our will in certain ways.
>
> (Radhakrishnan 1980: 57)

Lack of 'ethical discipline' and strong 'personal inclination' mark Lalaji's actions whether it is in relation to corruptible government officers, supplicants who come to his office for help, or with his children. Ironically, Lalaji's eiron qualities of practical good sense, pragmatic wisdom and shrewd assessment of character are the very qualities that alienate him from 'serenity and detachment'. These are the attributes that make him a successful businessman which at the same time leave him as the deluded alazon overcome by *rajas*.

The opposing aspects of Lalaji's character, his ruthlessness in business dealings compared to his need for companionship, community togetherness and pride and love for his family, reflect the tensions that exist in the novel between a tolerant, kindly irony and a dark, more critical view of the widespread foolishness and materialism of Delhi society. This more pessimistic viewpoint is part of a general irony that sees the human condition as fundamentally absurd. It will feature more frequently in the comic ironies and more pervasively in the later darker ironies when the 'innocent unawareness' of alazons is repeatedly shown to bring about the 'inescapable contradictions and incongruities ... of the human condition' (Muecke 1969: 121).

On the whole however, the portrayal of a 'chattering monkey society devoted to snobbery and slander' (AC: 48) is maintained with the genial wit and humour that characterize descriptions of Nimmi's romance, Mataji's quarrels with Shanta's mother and most obviously, of the comic, endearing side to Lalaji's personality. They show aspects of him when he appears to be free of the more destructive effects of attachment to money-making. Part of his zest for life and his individuality rest on habits and personal preferences that are far removed from the wealth and prestige he is associated with. He enjoys sleeping outdoors, preferring to wake up as in his younger days 'to sky and hedges and crows' (NP: 11). There are seven marble bathrooms in his house but he cleans himself at the garden

tap and brushes his teeth with a margosa twig. Although the ironic viewpoint shifts between these two faces of Lalaji and emphasizes at the end the alazon's delusion and pride, the perspective on Lalaji in relation to the other members of his family is that of a genuinely loving, caring member. If he is capable of the alazon's rationalizations to excuse his business tactics the narrative also highlights those aspects of Lalaji that show his attachment to matters other than money, or demonstrates how interconnected they are. When a second daughter is born to Om and Shanta, the ironic narrative shows his excessive pride and sentimentality but it also endears Lalaji to us by showing his spontaneity, his extreme happiness in the humorous Indian-English of his outburst:

> 'What a life!'.... The life of a queen she will have. What else? Like all the daughters born into my house!.... 'How beautiful she will be, like my Nimmi, like a queen. Such a wedding we will make for her, the best husband in the whole of Hindistan we will get for her, the richest, the fairest ....'
>
> (NP: 15)

When, he learns that Kanta plans to send her children to boarding schools the narrative captures his traditional, old-world values and despite his worldly ways, a sense of the old man's puzzlement:

> How could parents live without children or children without parents?.... For it was only the children - running from the women's quarters to the men's, into the kitchen, into the neighbouring houses - it was only they who united a family, united a neighbourhood.... The kissing and the petting, the scolding and the smacking, ... he could not imagine life without them. There was no life without them; they were as the sounds and the smells of a home, its soul.
>
> (NP: 144-145)

In the relations between Lalaji and his family (which will be discussed later) we see the working of Jhabvala's ironic wit as she shows the clash of wills of deluded alazons all caught in the 'bondage to action' and the absurdities of the humorous society. At times Lalaji is

shown to be the chief alazon of the old society as we see him ruthlessly achieve his goals. At other times the children and his wife and sister Phupji, seem to be more strongly dominated by *rajas*, leaving Lalaji touchingly helpless in their collective callousness. In these conflicts and the subsequent reconciliations between Lalaji and the various members of his family, we see aspects of the materialism of her protagonists that Jhabvala will develop more fully in her ironies. Whether it is the newly-rich world of self-made businessmen like Lalaji and Dev Raj, the stylish, social world of club life or the Westernized, shallow modernity of Chandra and Kanta's world, the nature of passion rules under various guises. The ironic narrative teases the reader with a collection of characters devoid of 'lucidity'; it seems to ask us which of the characters is the more blameworthy: Lalaji who is immoral and corrupting, Phupji whose public piety hides a violent animosity towards those who threaten the family 'honour', Chandra who condemns evil and corruption yet lives the good life derived from it, or Om, a younger Lalaji but without the warmth, 'sentiment' or the 'loving heart' of his father (NP: 124).

In Lalaji's relations with Chandra and Kanta we see the often irreconcilable interests of business and family accommodated through the strength of *rajas* on both parties. Both sides 'help' each other to maintain their goals and 'selfish desires'. Chandra helps his father remove the incriminating letter not out of any sense of filial duty but to maintain a style of living that only Lalaji's gratitude and financial help can make possible. Lalaji assures his son of his continued financial help for 'It is my duty to help you', yet the implication is given that a Lalaji disgraced by involvement in a corruption case is in no position to help his children and grandchildren. The final thrust in Lalaji's argument reveals a combination of the alazon's confidence of his power and the eiron's shrewd understanding of the art of 'dissembling' and of survival. Jhabvala has him arguing for his case in the third person. We

see Lalaji deliberately distancing the situation for the sake of his son who is so self-righteously against bribery and corruption but who must be made to see the material consequences of Lalaji's incrimination. Speaking of the 'innocent man' who is under investigation Lalaji says:

> Just think, such a man may have relatives who are in responsible positions, perhaps they may even be working for Government - how will it be for them when the name of their relative is printed in all the newspapers and spoken in all the bazaars? Will they not suffer too? .... And also such a man when he is called for witness, people will perhaps not trust him so much, his business will suffer, consequently his family will suffer. For whereas before he could give them money and help them out of difficulty whenever needed, now this will not be so easy for him and perhaps it will be necessary for him to refuse them when they come to him to ask for help.
>
> (NP: 150)

This scene between Lalaji, Chandra and Kanta, which begins Part Three of The Nature of Passion (NP: 143) and that between Kanta and Chandra after the surrender of the letter (NP: 183) are rich in ironic implications, displaying the incongruity between the situation as perceived by the victims of irony (Lalaji, Chandra and Kanta) and as the reader observes it (Muecke 1969: 19-20). With both sides bound to the ties of passion and worldliness, we see Lalaji skilfully get his way by consciously working on his son's materialistic self-interest. Yet Lalaji is a victim of irony: firstly in the fact that he has to resort to these tactics with his own son; secondly, even as Lalaji speaks ironically to his son, he himself is convinced of his own superiority and righteousness of purpose. In the conclusion to the episode the narrative allows us this view of the alazon protagonist, self-confident, triumphant yet unaware of his own faults:

> With this he slowly gathered himself together, drew out his feet on which he had been sitting and, with great dignity, assumed his shoes. 'Your house is so cool,' he said. 'It is pleasant to sit here.'
>
> (NP: 150)

The elaborate mental juggling undertaken by both sides to attain their ends is an important part of that feature of first-phase comedy in which 'a sense of absurdity ... arises as a kind of backfire or recall after the work has been seen or read' (AC: 226). Lalaji's visit to Chandra's house is more a business call than a father's visit. Fatherly and filial duty is seen to be done when the father convinces the son to carry out his duty by subverting the course of justice. When the letter is eventually removed, Chandra's fears are of discovery and the threat to his career advancement rather than the ethics of the matter. The spectre of an 'official inquiry' is finally ended with the consolation offered by Kanta that Lalaji's bribes will silence all investigations. Thus Chandra and Kanta are dealt with in the same way Lalaji deals with business rivals and Westernized upstarts: with 'hints and circumlocutions', and reminders of 'gratifications and unspoken obligations'. Self-deceiving and unaware, Chandra and Kanta in self-betraying irony are spokesmen for the delusions of the humorous society:

> [Chandra] continued in a severe lecturing tone, 'there are always officials, people in high places, who care more about money than about duty and responsibility, and it is just these people who put so much power into Pitaji's hands.'
>
> 'It is a terrible thing,' she said. 'Bribery and corruption.' ... Of course you and I and all the people we know, like the Ghoshs and the Sankar Lingams, are very much against it, but what can a few honest people do when it is so deeply rooted in political life.
>
> (NP: 187)

This conversation occurs after Chandra has surrendered the incriminating letter to Lalaji and both are discussing Lalaji's 'shameful' 'blackmail'. Chandra sees his capitulation as the responsible act of a father and husband determined to maintain happiness for his family. In this Kanta provides the necessary support:

> And it was not you alone he threatened but worse, your wife and your children .... Just think, if you had refused, the whole future of your children would have suffered. What would have happened to their education? Also my health would have been affected because you know, and your father knows too, that I cannot bear the heat in the plains. I have to go to the hills for the summer ....'
>
> (NP: 186)

The element of blind self-confidence coloured by selfishness and complacency, is a mark of the victim of irony (Muecke 1969: 38). This is seen in the way Chandra and Kanta align themselves against those 'who care more about money than about their duty and responsibility' only after the consoling thought that 'although it is very bad that things are so', Lalaji has 'so much power through bribing people'.

Om, like Phupji, belongs to the traditionalist group, those who loudly proclaim traditional ideals of piety, and filial duty, and criticize dishonour, and the wilful independence in the young that make them 'spoilt and immodest' and bring shame to the family. Phupji 'the most severe upholder of old customs' blames Lalaji's wealth and pride for his neglect of the 'proper customs and ceremonies' (NP: 87, 90), yet it is Amar Nath's wealth and the promise of a 25-*lakh* contract that convince Phupji that 'a first-class proposal' has been offered for Nimmi. Om's views on the position of girls in their household echo Phupji's on the importance of feminine behaviour for family honour, which are themselves echoes of ancient laws and teachings pertaining to the ideal behaviour of girls (Cormack 1961: 33-38; Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 8). Nimmi's life will only 'begin in earnest' when 'we will find you a husband'. Om's married life represents a view of the society 'controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law' (AC: 169). His work at night to meet 'people on business' are in fact parties where rich businessmen like him 'drink a lot and there would be dancing-girls' (NP: 129). Yet when he learns that Viddi has been to parties where there are such girls he is horrified. The text captures Om's self-righteous brotherly concern as well as the

inverted logic in the last sentence which also counters the pious sentiments of the preceding sentence:

> You had girls there? .... He did not like this. He had very strong moral principles and did not approve of his younger brother attending such parties. These things were for older men, married men who knew about life.
>
> (NP: 172)

Later in a 'new accord' that warms Lalaji's heart, Viddi with all the trappings of the 'Sahib', fine clothes, money and self-assurance, is accepted into Om's group. He looks forward to having Viddi as a junior partner 'when their interests were as one' and 'he could take him along on all his pleasures, introduce him into the world' (NP: 174). Full membership in the humorous society entitles an 'older and more experienced' Viddi to Om's promise that he will be taken to 'a real party' (NP: 171).

Viddi despises his father and Om's obsession with business. He himself hates money, ('it is horrible'), convinced that his family's ways are 'killing his soul'. Viddi yearns for, among other things, culture, good music, fine art, modern literature, more money to buy classical records, books, milkshakes and cakes, an overseas education, and the chance to enjoy life with the foreign girls. The ironic focus on Viddi shows the discrepancy between his self-image, that of bohemian lover of the arts in a family of unappreciative, money-minded materialists, and the truth of Lalaji's youngest son. He is in fact a pleasure - loving, bored young man who wants more money to impress and entertain his friends. His artistic interests can only command the company of bogus artistes who are little more than mercenary parasites. Lalaji solves the problem posed by his youngest son's rebelliousness with the decision to get 'a token job for the boy to cut his teeth on' (NP: 42). Later, Viddi is given an allowance of 500 rupees. Lalaji's coldly detached thoughts on the effect

of the increase and Viddi's excited response point to the worldliness of father and son, united in their selfish desires:

> Let him have his 500 rupees a month. After three months of it, he would start him on the sweepers' hutments and give him a salary of 800 rupees a month and by that time he trusted Viddi would have learnt the value of money - how much better 800 rupees is than 500, 1,000 rupees than 800, 2,000 rupees than 1,000 - and would adjust his ideas accordingly.
>
> (NP: 98)

> Viddi,.. began at once to think of all the things he could do with 500 rupees a month: How many chocolate milkshakes and cigars and pastries he could stand treat for the Rendezvous; what beautiful clothes he could buy for himself, suits and shirts and shoes and a gold wristwatch.
>
> (NP: 98)

This is followed by a significant last thought that reveals the extent of Viddi's artistic inclinations: 'And of course, books and pictures and records of classical music' (NP: 98). The significant afterthought, a device that occurs often in The Nature of Passion, provides the ironic counterpoint to Viddi's intellectual pretensions. A 'new solidarity' is achieved with Om, and with the humorous, unenlightened society as Viddi tastes the fruits of 'a pile of sweet, crisp wonder-working bank-notes' (NP: 105). Viddi now sees his father and Om differently:

> He liked the way Om kept saying 'we', it gave him a sense of solidarity. [Om and his father] stood behind him, they guarded him, and in their wisdom and experience they would see that no trouble came to him.
>
> (NP: 173)

With Nimmi, Lalaji is at his most vulnerable: the calculating, shrewd man of business reduced to sentimental helplessness by his love for his pretty spoilt daughter. Lalaji's boastful confidence on matters related to Nimmi, whether it concerns her eligibility or the wedding he will give her, continues to the end of the novel. Whilst she is 'like a fragrance' to him, Nimmi herself is ashamed of her unsophisticated, conservative family and fears knowledge of her humble origins and Lalaji's

work will alienate her friends whose families are professionals, Western-educated and elegant. Although gentle irony marks Jhabvala's treatment of Nimmi's vanity and self-centredness in her romance with Pheroze and her attitude towards her family, Nimmi's superficiality is also clearly seen. She readily accepts the betrothal, refusing, despite her claims of liberal independence, to find a way out. Happily the traditional, social approval for feminine 'conformity, obedience, self-control and harmony' (Cormack 1961: 188) coincides with Nimmi's love for the good life. Her realization that her 'independence'is'mere illusion' is not so much comedy's protagonist acquiring knowledge but ironic comedy's '*cosi fan tutte*', a submission to the easiest and most profitable way out. The switch from Pheroze to Kuku is not difficult as Kuku can provide all that Nimmi expected from Pheroze: a rich lifestyle, travels to Europe, visiting friends overseas, with the added advantage of the family's approval. Nimmi's lack of 'lucidity', to rise above the self, is underlined in her thoughts at the picnic:

> [He] looked so nice, so young, so charming - he was wearing a gaily-flowered bush-shirt and suede shoes - that it was quite easy to imagine they were young lovers and their marriage of their own choosing.
>
> (NP: 188)

The pre-nuptial picnic which affirms for the last time the triumph of the humorous society and its powerful leader Lalaji is in an ironic way the occasion for Lalaji to be seen at his happiest when he is surrounded by 'men of his own community' and 'the sense of kinship they engendered' and when he can look forward to spending his profits on both Nimmi and her older sister Uma's wedding. The grandeur of Lalaji's picture of Nimmi's wedding festivities captures the alazon's unawareness of his shortcomings, Lalaji's 'thirst for pleasure and attachment', his pride and love for his 'pearl' Nimmi, and the overlap of personal business success and family happiness. The narrative shifts between a mimicking of Lalaji's thoughts

and words and a narrative voice that good-humoredly comments on Lalaji's state of mind even as it nudges us into supplying our own ironic undermining of the alazon's confident unawareness:

> And after Usha, Nimmi. Here he could hardly contain himself .... If people were to talk of Usha's wedding for years to come, the memory of Nimmi's they should carry with them into their next birth. A hundred cooks and confectioners would be sitting in his house day and night ... six bands in red and gold uniforms to serenade ... Delhi drained of chickens and rice and spices and sugar and ghee; all traffic blocked by guests ... all the richest men of Delhi ... the whole Government - should come to honour his daughter. And after the wedding - for he could not stop there - .. he would make her life a paradise.
>
> (NP: 191-192)

Yet even in the midst of what is a gently ironic exposure of Lalaji, the ironic narrative voice does not fail to remind us that the conclusion to Lalaji's thoughts is very much a confirmation of his own success and by implication, the man of passion's 'thirst for pleasure and attachment':

> And when she went out all the world should turn its head and ask, 'Who is this Queen?' to be answered, 'She is the daughter of Lala Narayan Das Verma.'
>
> (NP: 192)

Sohan Lal's advice to Lalaji on parental duty to daughters is from Kalidasa:(7)

> It is written that a daughter is but a loan to her parents; when it is time for her to go to her husband's house, they must return this loan.
>
> (NP: 175)

Lalaji accepts the truth of this but can only abide by it in the manner of a man of passion. His reluctance to agree to Nimmi's betrothal is a father's need to hold on to his daughter despite the financial benefits of the offer. Lalaji changes his mind only when the pride and honour of the Verma family is threatened by widespread knowledge of Nimmi's friendship

with a boy from another community. Lalaji's love for Nimmi (and for his other children) is seen as an extension of his love for the things of the world. Unlike Sohan Lal he cannot be 'withdrawn and detached' and regards Amar Nath's interest even after the rumours, as indicating Nimmi's superior qualities:

> The match was too good for them to raise any difficulties. Lalaji had known it. If they had heard she had been seen with ten Parsis, still they would have been glad enough to have her: for such a prize was not to be had everyday.
>
> (NP: 174)

This is the same superior confidence that Lalaji expresses in his dealings with business associates or enemies. The 'decent business transactions' of the example to follow serves the same purpose as Lalaji's reference to his selfish daughter as 'a prize .. not to be had everyday'. They show the alazon's self-deceived ways, an inability to see beyond their delusions. In the following example, the understatement of the final sentence effectively reveals Lalaji's inherent confidence in being able to deal with such minor opponents:

> If they could get close enough to the Deputy Minister to confront him with temptation - actual, concrete, naked temptation, a pile of sweet, crisp wonder-working bank-notes - he would soon know how to follow the proper instincts of man, ... Lalaji looked forward to that day with pleasure. But until then, the man's presence in office had a paralysing effect on all decent business transactions. It was a great nuisance.
>
> (NP: 105)

Apart from Sohan Lal, the only other character who truly fulfils her *dharma* and is blessed with the attribute of 'lucidity' is Shanta. She is the ideal daughter-in-law, respectful and retiring, and the perfect wife, treating Om as both teacher and god, obeying the ancient law of *deva-guru* for which 'a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife' though 'he be destitute of virtue' (from The Laws of Manu quoted in

Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 121).[8] The value of Shanta's obedience and respectfulness (All she wanted was a peaceful life with everybody loving one another' [NP: 84]) is lost on the humorous society. Nimmi mocks her sister-in-law's dull life in the women's quarters and Mataji is oblivious of Shanta's unhappiness at the animosity Lalaji's womenfolk have for her mother:

> [Mataji] really was fond of the girl. Shanta was all that a daughter-in-law should be - respectful, obedient, hardworking. Only at the beginning ... had there been trouble; for whenever anything was said or hinted against her family, she would burst into tears and run away to sit in the bathroom. Afterwards she would go and tell Om. But he never listened to her .... So she had given up complaining to him. Nowadays, when things were spoken against her family, she sat quiet and pretended not to hear. She was a very good girl.
>
> (NP: 84)

Shanta's submissiveness, a serenity of sorts, contrasts with 'the frenzy' of the other womenfolk as they defend family 'honour'. Ultimately her calm, intelligent acceptance like that of Sohan Lal's spirituality and detachment are ineffectual in making any positive changes to the materialism and pretentiousness of the humorous society. Sohan Lal's monthly salary of 75 rupees (compared to the 25 lakh contract, Lalaji's impetuous gift of 200 rupees to Om to salve his guilt at losing his temper) like Mataji's opinion of Shanta as 'a good girl' because she tolerates their condemnation of her mother, are reflections of the older people's priorities, the ineffectuality of wisdom and control and ultimately of the values of the society.

Thus the harmony at the end of The Nature of Passion is without the crystallization of a new society around Nimmi and Kuku representatives of comedy's younger generation. The supremacy of the humorous society is indicated in details that ironically emphasize the way the children fit so well in the world their father has created for them. Om rejoices at the way his 'little brother' Viddi 'has become a great Sahib':

> Soon he will be such a big contractor he will eat us all up! and everybody laughed.
>
> (NP: 190)

The latest addition to the business world is himself happy with his increased allowance and introduction to his father's business:

> Viddi ... felt himself to be a man and liked it that the others should feel it too. He wore his new gold wrist-watch and a beautiful pair of nylon trousers made to measure.
>
> (NP: 190)

The common interest and superficial camaraderie built on 'the world of Clubs and parties', of being 'a great Sahib', is seen as the pleasing 'new accord between his eldest son and his youngest' (NP: 191). In the last paragraph of the novel Shanta significantly mistakes Viddi for her husband; 'he looked so much like him; even his voice, it seemed to her sounded like Om's'. The transformation from Viddi, who professes to be interested in the arts, to the unfeeling, money-minded Om is imminent in the humorous society. Finally for Nimmi, Kuku offers all that she has ever been interested in:

> She would be, at last, a member of the Club in her own right. She and her husband would drive up in their car, he sober in evening clothes, she gorgeous in sari and jewellery. They would dance in the ballroom and eat dinner on the lawn. Afterwards they would to on to a night club and dance some more.
>
> (NP: 189)

The sense of the impossibility of a new society being set up or of a movement from illusion to knowledge or reality (AC: 169) is most strongly centred in Lalaji. The last scenes of the novel capture conclusively the double aspects of Lalaji's character: the deluded alazon who deceives and the pragmatic eiron who has successfully engineered a degree of harmony in family and business affairs; the corrupt man of worldly goals and the

loving doting family-man often criticized and scolded by those who consider themselves more enlightened. In these last scenes Lalaji basks in the harmony he has created through all his manipulations of children, relatives, family friends and countless officers. Yet he is also the joyously happy father, thankful for the 'new accord' in the family, looking forward with almost child-like anticipation to the happiness he will create at Usha's, then at Nimmi's lavish weddings.

The final portrait of Lalaji is a culmination of Jhabvala's sometimes compassionate, sometimes sharp ironic portrayal of the manners of the humorous society, particularly through the opposing facets of Lalaji's personality. The impersonal irony of the later novels in which the narrative voice is detached features most clearly at the conclusion of The Nature of Passion. The 'eironic' narrative, one in which the ironic viewpoint resembles that of the old Greek eiron 'evasive and non-committal' (Muecke 1970: 15) is seen in the scenes of contrasting import at the end of the novel: family togetherness and future conflict; harmony and perpetuation of humours and *rajas*; ostentatious pride in personal achievement and love for the family, a celebration of gracious living and affluence with hints of the poverty of India's masses. The composite picture is one of ambivalences, lightly touched on in the conclusion of To Whom She Will and more apparent in The Nature of Passion. The two facets to the personality of the novel's central protagonist, his vitality and warmth on the one hand, and his egotism and materialism on the other also reflect the idea of an India looking out to the promise of self-rule and progress and yet hampered by corruption and self-seeking. The Nature of Passion presents a world of comic variety and charm but the beginnings of the European's distancing and of eironia in the narrative is already seen in the ambivalence of the novel's resolution.

In lamenting the life he leads, Viddi unwittingly makes a comment on the erosion of spiritual values and the rise of commercialism of the times:

> Also there are no books in our house, only the Gita and a few commercial Registers.
>
> (NP: 33)

A similar brief but telling description occurs in To Whom She Will when we are given a few details in Radha's room:

> On the little table next to the bed lay a copy of the Gita and on top of the wardrobe several issues of True Story.
>
> (TWW: 159)

Materialism and worldliness tend to overcome the teachings of the *Gita*, reduced to being the obligatory religious text for every household, often referred to as Phupji and Radha do, in circumstances which have little to do with right action or altruistic motives. The Nature of Passion portrays a world ruled by craving and attachment to the material, marked by the fruit of passion - 'disquiet' and 'suffering'. The feasting and happiness of the final scene has ironic counterpoints in the attention to descriptive details, and in the implications of the 'new solidarity'. The feasting and anticipation of the weddings is undercut by the readers' attention being drawn to an older, poorer face of India:

> In the distance, out on the barren plains, the broken flight of steps of a vanished palace led to nowhere and a man with a stick and a loincloth walked behind two yoked and shabby bullocks.
>
> (NP: 190)

Another significant ironic counterpoint occurs earlier at the Kutb Minar when the young lovers Nimmi and Pheroze are interrupted by a 'whining ragged figure [who] rose up from nowhere and begged for money'. When two annas are given so that they will not be 'pestered' the beggar 'merged

again with the dry soil and withered bushes of the landscape outside' (NP: 103).

The 'sweet harmoniousness' of the betrothal picnic is that of people bound by the predominance of *rajas*. The comedy of Nimmi's romance and Viddi's rebellion is darkened by the irony of the complete triumph of the humorous society. Lalaji, despite his endearing warmth and sentimentality, will continue to find reasons of *dharma* in his obsession with material gain; Although absent, Chandra and Kanta who plan to live 'beyond any point of contact' with the family will continue to benefit from Lalaji's generosity. Nimmi will enjoy a life better than she has been used to with marriage to a rich, Westernized young man. Finally, there is the combined power of Om and Viddi, one that will ensure the continuance of the values of the unenlightened society - its follies, misuse and abuse of power. The humorous society will remain strong with *rajas* but it will lose the 'loving heart' of Lalaji.

The Householder (1960)

The Householder is the story of a newly-married youth's growth into manhood, self-confidence and understanding of his duties. Prem is a young teacher of Hindi, married, by arrangement, to Indu. He despairs of being a successful family-head and provider - a householder - with all the problems he has to face. There is his young wife who is pregnant and seems to him childish, disobedient and disrespectful. His landlord, Mr. Siegal, charges too much; the Headmaster of the school, Mr. Khanna, underpays the staff. His financial worries are compounded by professional

dissatisfaction at his teaching ability and at students who have respect neither for him nor for learning. His own mother, on a visit, quarrels with Indu; and a disappointing childhood friend, Raj, who is too preoccupied with family matters, worsens Prem's loneliness when Indu leaves for her parents' home. The novel traces Prem's gradual taking up of the role and duties of husband, provider, teacher and member of the community through accepting his abilities and limitations, shedding adolescent expections of help from others and more importantly, stabilizing marital harmony with Indu. Inevitably maturity is gradually achieved with better self-knowledge and perception of others. Nostalgia for the easy adolescent days of the village of Ankhpur gradually gives way to a quiet pride at 'having established himself in a big town like Delhi'. The novel ends with Prem and Indu harmoniously united after the difficulties of the first year of marriage but with Prem still subject to the worries of a poor householder.

The Householder is Jhabvala's fourth novel, published the same year as the eventful visit to England and the subsequent increased awareness of and inability to accept the unfair suffering of the poor in India. Chronologically it should continue the darker perspective of Jhabvala's third novel Esmond in India which preceded The Householder by two years. However the later novel's concerns are with subjects more positive than the portrayal of the misery and hopelessness of an East-West marriage. The development of mutual love between two young newly-weds and Prem's 'fitting in' as a householder of Delhi are matters related to the comic mode. The ironic viewpoint is comparatively subdued and although Prem is subject to irony, the narrative tone is sympathetic. The Householder thus falls more readily within the group of ironic comedies and may perhaps be seen as a kind of unintentional farewell piece to the first ten years in India. Here Jhabvala appears to maintain a balance between her deep

affection for her adopted home and its people and a growing awareness of its many social problems.

Prem's upright, earnest nature and the love he shares with Indu are emphasized as much as the self-interest and materialistic values of the people Prem works with. The setting is that of the unrefined, newly-rich business middle-class of Delhi - the Khannas with their pretensions to wealth and stylish living and the noisy, modern Siegals. There is also the world of the lower middle-class and the unending financial worries of Prem, Sohan Lal (a fellow lecturer) and Raj. There is a sense of Delhi as the big city that draws various types of people but that togetherness and a simpler, more traditional way of living are possible only in places like Ankhpur and Mehrauli (where Sohan Lal lives) and in pockets of spiritual togetherness like that created by Swamji and his disciples in the city itself. Prem's friend, Hans Loewe, the German spiritual seeker, tells him that 'Everything is so spiritual - we can wash off our dirty materialism when we come here to your India' (TH: 30). In the context of the Khannas and Siegals and the enforced materialistic concerns of spiritually-inclined people like Sohan Lal and Prem, the statement is an ironic comment on the erosion of religious and traditional values of modern India and on the delusion and wilful myopia of seekers like Hans.

Unlike the young protagonists in To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion, Prem and Indu are married; their problems are with each other and with the community they live in. Although The Householder does not have the earlier novels' emphasis on adolescent romances and parental opposition, it however shares many features in common with the earlier comedies, placing it in Jhabvala's group of ironic comedies with its own special features as a comedy of Frye's first phase. Two staples of comedy may be seen. The first is conflict between the young and the older groups. Although the conflict is not the clash over choice of lovers, Prem's ideals and priorities are shown to be at variance with those of his

'elders and betters', those who hold the key to his happiness and well-being. Mr. Khanna, Mr. Siegal and to a lesser extent, Mr. Chaddha, the conceited History professor, are the 'blockers' as Prem seeks to consolidate his position as a responsible family-man.

The second feature is the integration portrayed at the end. Comedy's integration and ritual feasting is seen in the modest but happy lunch Prem and Indu host for Raj and his family. It presents comedy's final harmoniousness but as often in first phase comedy, and in the ambivalent resolutions of Jhabvala's novels, the integration has ironic overtones. In comedy 'the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated' (AC: 165); in first phase comedy it is the eirons who have to accommodate themselves within the restrictive, unfair and irrational 'laws' set up by the alazons. Implicit in the joyous feasting of the two young families is that it is a brief change for Prem and Raj, from the round of financial worries of householdership and the enforced anonymity of being part of the world of the Khannas and Siegals.

The uncertainties over Prem and Indu's future that the novel's ending suggests, are counteracted by the love that develops between the two. Practically strangers at first, the growth of their mutual attraction and respect provides not only an important basis for the reader's assessment of Prem's success as a family man, but also balances the ambivalence of the final integration scene. The wedding celebration at Mehrauli (which will be discussed later) is thus an important episode for it presents Prem and Indu as an established married couple, and suggests in the fulfilment and pride Prem feels, that inspite of the difficulties of householdership in Delhi there is always the love they share and a place like Mehrauli to retire to.

In To Whom She Will, a sense of the eiron's individuality is retained as we see Amrita and Krishna maintain their good sense even as

they integrate with their humour-ridden relatives. In The Nature of Passion, the young protagonists' opposition to their elders is short-lived; they are shown to belong naturally to Lalaji's world of material pursuits and there is no hint of a redeemed society built by intelligent, alert young people. The Householder less buoyant than the two earlier comedies continues the darker ironic tone of The Nature of Passion as integration, something sought after by Prem in an effort to be 'absorbed' into the society of (experienced) householders, brings with it a necessary acknowledgement of the divisions that separate the Sohan Lals and Prems of the world from those who rule in the humorous society. Thus the comic elements of The Householder, the many conversations conducted at cross-purposes, the earnest posturings of the protagonist who cannot wait to be a complete family man, are constantly undercut by the ironic fact that Prem tries so hard to seek guidance, comradeship and assistance from those least able or willing to provide them.

Whilst Prem's longing to be 'absorbed' reduces somewhat the struggle between the two worlds of young and old, a feature of To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion, we nevertheless note a pessimistic ironic viewpoint in the fact that the absorption is achieved not in terms of the values Prem believes in or shows - courtesy, consideration, tolerance and caring - but on the alazon's terms. In this respect the triumph of the humorous society is as conclusive as that of The Nature of Passion. The difference lies however in the nature of the younger protagonists, the earnest, committed, loving Prem and the superficial,selfish Verma offspring. Thus, as surely as Prem is absorbed to become one of the thousands of beleaguered householders of Delhi, he and Indu stand, like Amrita and Krishna Sen of To Whom She Will, apart from the humorous society. The Householder, although not as 'sunny' as To Whom She Will belongs to the group of comedies in the way the hero and heroine gain maturity and

enlightenment, both in their social and personal life (Prem and Indu are Jhabvala's most happily married couple) within the humorous society.

Apart from Sohan Lal, all the characters are sources of comedy. The narrational stance is generally one of benign, amused irony, particularly towards Prem's early inexperience, the maturation process and the adjustments of two people testing out their roles of householder and housewife. Comedy arises from situations when Prem's actions do not bring about the expected or desired results. For example his serious attempts to educate Indu in what he considers social etiquette, that is drinking tea with the little finger slightly extended merely serves to reduce his wife to amazement and uncontrollable giggles (TH: 47). At other times the narrative highlights the constant undermining of Prem's modesty and serious adult demeanour by his 'unworthy' thoughts about Indu's body. Verbal irony reveals the sharp satire directed at the alazons as when Mr. Khanna tucks into his breakfast and talks about the benefits of various types of food, ignoring or oblivious of Prem's shy, awkward pleas for a rise in salary. Whether it is through Mrs. Khama's Indianized English, or the platitudes and empty moral sentiments of Mr. Khanna and Mr. Chaddha, the narrative highlights the alazon's scorn or indifference to a nobody like Prem and to the traditions and religious ideals he has been brought up to believe in.

The concept of the four periods of the ideal Hindu life was developed by the beginning of the fourth century AD when the main features of the Hindu view of life were established. The four *asramas* are the *brahmacharya* (for the student), *grihasthya* (for the householder), *vanaprasthya* (for the hermit) and *saanyasa* (for the ascetic). The duties of a student are to receive instruction in the Vedas, the earliest collection of hymns, sacrifices and prayers, to acquire meditative disciplines, to be chaste and develop self control and to prepare for the later responsibilities of life. *Grihasthya* is the time of marriage,

vocation and family responsibilities. In the third stage there is a gradual release of worldly attachments as the older householder turns to thoughts of liberation and hands over the management of family affairs to his sons. Finally as a *sansayi*, a break is made with worldly ties as the individual gives full attention to attaining *moksha* or freedom from the cycle of actions and rebirths. Although it is generally understood that the four-fold life remains an ideal which few carry out in detail (Walker 1968 vol. 1, 84), the *asrama* pattern influences the life of the Hindu and he does 'feel an obligation to apply the pattern in some fashion to his life' (Organ 1974, 204). Each stage helps in the cumulative effort towards the realization of *moksha* and liberation from *samsara* or suffering. The *asrama dharma* are the duties appropriate to the individual in each of the four stages on the path to the highest goal of liberation. Although Prem's concern is with the duties of the householder and Jhabvala exploits the ironic potential of the second stage of life for the portrayal of her newly-married protagonist in modern-day India, much of the ironic comedy of Prem's failures and successes in his eventful first year are set against the *asrama* concept as a whole. Prem, at different times, and often at the same time, is the eager householder, the family man yearning for the freedom of *brahmacharya* days, and the married man longing for the less worldly concerns of those who have passed beyond the second stage.

The novel's title initiates the traditional framework drawn from the concept of *asramadharma*. The title provides a focal point of Jhabvala's development of plot, theme, characterization and the overall ironic viewpoint. The alazons' complacency, Prem's efforts and the final outcome are seen against the duties of the true householder; divergences of the actual from the ideal are the basis for the workings of Jhabvala's irony. On one level, Prem's position as householder is ironic for, insecure, worried and inexperienced, he is a fledgling family-man, just beginning

the process with little of the stature and dignity associated with the office. Also the protagonist-householder is in the ironic position of underestimating his own special qualities for eventual success as a householder. His conception of the *grihasthya* and indeed of the student stage is an incomplete one with the emphasis merely on material sufficiency. Prem's interest in religion as seen in his visits to Swamiji emphasizes his latent piety and his potential as a true householder. Another ironic situation arises in the fact that Prem struggles to carry out his duties in an uncaring, materialistic society built on divisions of prestige income, possessions and the work one does.

Arising from these situations, comic and ironic elements prevail to the end of the novel. These are united by the novel's central concept of householdership, which is itself replete with ironic contradictions. Being a good householder is dependent on financial sufficiency for the material goods of life. Financial sufficiency involves corruption of one kind or another, leaving the aspiring householder no longer a good one. The learning Prem acquires leaves him with an awareness that to belong to the society of the elders, a condition synonymous with being a householder, sacrifices and accommodations have to be made.

According to the *Mahabharata*, 'the life of domesticity is the most difficult of all the four modes of life'.(9) The householder is the supporter of everyone else. Apart from the family members:

> 'The gods, *pitris* [elders], guests and servants all depend for their sustenance upon the person leading a life of domesticity.
>
> (Quoted in Organ 1974: 205)

As husband, father-to-be, rent-payer and employer of a little servant boy, Prem's worries revolve around improving on the meagre 175 rupees he receives every month. Efforts towards getting a pay-rise from Mr. Khanna and getting Mr. Siegal to reduce the rent prove unsuccessful. All eight

attempts come to nothing as Prem's shyness and delicacy prevent him from being outright and aggressive. By the end of the novel the main concern of Jhabvala's young family-head in his first year of office is to hold on to his teaching job and the certainty of 175 rupees. In contrast, Mr. Siegal's wealth in no way ensures the proper duties of the householder. Apart from drinking, playing cards, entertaining and sleeping, his domestic responsibilities merely involve supplying his son Romesh with pocket money for a steady supply of film shows, songs and entertainment and a house with servants for his wife. Mr. Siegal's irresponsibility is implied in the unhappy marriage that has been arranged for his daughter (her husband is a compulsive drinker) and in Mr. Siegal's refusal to do something about the situation. In the Laws of Manu it is stated that of all the separate stages of life, the householder is 'the most excellent, for he supports the other three' (quoted in Du Bary (ed.) 1958: 230). Mr. Siegal's inability to 'support' the other three stages, for himself and his children is seen in the unhappiness of the women of his family, in the self-indulgent adult life that Romesh will probably lead. The ideal of being supporter to the other three stages is one that the thoughtful, caring Prem with much less money can fulfil more successfully.

The ironic comedy of Prem's position, wanting to carry out his *dharma* yet indulging in thoughts of the ease and freedom of the single life he so recently enjoyed, is captured in Prem's first attempt to get Mr. Siegal to lower the rent. His decision to stand 'humble and submissive like a child' before his landlord and appeal to his sense of duty as experienced elder and 'father-figure' is not realized as Prem is irresistibly drawn to playing the role of wise teacher and adult before the Siegal's son, Romesh. He speaks of the importance of studies, preparation for examinations, secure jobs and the evils of filmshows and amusements. With Mr. Siegal's appearance and his gratified pleasure at Prem's concern, an ironic situation develops: Prem acquires, for once,

some of the stature of the position he so desperately seeks only to want at the same time to appear young and helpless and requiring a landlord's help. Prem is endeared to the reader in the way he is shown to resolve his dilemma; his sense of duty and good manners forcing him to continue with the role of 'mentor':

> He wanted to look young and foolish, yet somehow after what Mr. Siegal had said, he could not help feeling elderly and responsible; and so when he spoke he spoke in that role, as one weighed down by years and responsibilities. 'It is our duty,' he said 'to guide young men and set them on the right path in Life.'
>
> (TH: 40)

The irony increases when Prem gets into full stride and begins to elaborate on the *asrama* concept, a good opening for his petition to Mr. Siegal but lost because Prem 'felt shy, especially before Romesh whom he was to serve as a good example'. The two he wants to impress are however more concerned with tea and vegetable samosas. The fourth stage is skipped, implying not just Prem's uncertainty of it ('he was not quite sure'), but the combined unreadiness of the group for any discussion of the fourth *asrama*. Prem is too weighed down by the material problems of the householder, tying him to a moral materialism that leaves him unready for the renunciation of the *saanyasi*. Mr. Siegal on the other hand is too wrapped up in worldly pursuits to be even interested in 'the duties and obligations' of a father or friend. Later in the story we see the same indifference as at the final attempt, Prem's brave monologue on his straitened circumstances in interrupted by Mr. Siegal trying to dislodge food stuck between his teeth (TH: 125-126).

Prem's introduction to Swamiji by Sohan Lal (TH: 54-57), his subsequent visits to share in the camaraderie of the meetings and prayer sessions (TH: 94-96; 126-128) are important episodes for they highlight Prem's commitment to the righteous life, the potential he shows for the later spirituality of the third *asrama* of the first dweller, and also,

ironically, the shortcomings of the humorous society. The concept of *karma yoga* or *karma-marga*, the way or path of action or service, allows Jhabvala lee-way to ironically highlight the merits of her diffident protagonist and expose the follies of his self-assured associates. The different *margas* or paths to *moksha* have been broadly distinguished into three types: *jnana yoga* (the way of wisdom or knowledge), *bhakti yoga* (the way of devotion) and *karma yoga* (the way of action) (Radhakrishnan 1980: 58). For Prem, as it is with Jhabvala's older and richer householder Lalaji of The Nature of Passion, the pursuit of *artha* (material possessions) and the path of action are most appropriate for that period of life in which the energies are devoted to providing for the family, seeing to the material needs of more than just one's immediate family and succeeding in one's vocation. Works, selfless actions help to purify the mind and bring about religious awakening that will lead to *moksha* (Organ 1974: 268). Thus the spiritual life is not entirely denied Prem for instead of the impossible renunciation that Swamiji asks for, Prem can, as provider and teacher, work towards liberation.

The motif of work and service is apparent in The Householder, used often for ironic effect. The characters are preoccupied with the work they do: Mr. Khanna plays the role of dedicated educationist; Mr. Siegal is the friendly landlord who nevertheless adroitly avoids all matters connected with rent and tenancy in his conversations with Prem; Mr. Chaddha exudes intellectual confidence and authority, but is unkind and arrogant towards Prem's inexperience, and Raj whilst constantly complaining of the heavy workload implies there is more to being a government clerk than a struggling lecturer in a small private college. Only Sohan Lal shows Prem's quiet, dogged determination to do the best he can. We see Prem, with all his fears for the future successfully utilizing his worldly duties towards a spiritual end. In the end, Prem is faithful to the basic fact of karma yoga - 'to work for works' sake'

(Virekenanda, 1962: 32). Indeed in Prem's concern to be employed, no longer worried about the amount he earns and resigned to the elders' indifference he lives up ironically and poignantly to the central ideal of the *Gita* to engage in disinterested action without regard for the rewards of action.

The householder's *karma-yoga* manifests itself in ironic comedy sometimes as when Prem corrects his students' essays at an old, shaky table because 'he felt there was a certain dignity about working at a table rather than on the floor'. Then there is Prem's eloquent analysis of Sohan Lal's financial problems to Mr. Khanna when his main purpose is to ask for his own rise. Yet the irony is always touched with compassion as Prem's earnest efforts, however unsuccessful are contrasted with the total lack of any *marga* or even awareness of their duties for the older householders.

Self-interest characterizes the actions of the Khannas. They reap the financial benefits of running a second-rate cramped private school for the academically unsuccessful offsprings of rich parents:

> At regular intervals the Principal would ... tell the students how the college had always had a good name and that this good name must be preserved at all costs, and that, therefore, he would expel - 'without mercy' he said, looking sternly round the room - any student who did not know how to behave himself. But though he spoke very severely, occasionally pounding his fist on a desk, he never did expel anyone because he could not bear to refund the fees.
>
> (TH: 10)

They employ insincere grovellers like Mr. Chadda or mild-mannered ones like Sohan Lal, householders grateful for employment, however poorly paid. They make up Mr. Khanna's 'most distinguished and reliable teaching staff' (TH: 122). Mrs. Khanna makes a profit on the tea she supplies to the lecturers and the Khannas' whole attitude to their work is ironically captured in the embroidered message on Mrs. Khanna's towel 'Work is Worship' (TH: 11). This concept underlies the idea of *karma-yoga*:

dedicated selfless action is a form of worship. It is the title of one of Swami Virehananda's lectures in which he emphasizes that working is itself a reverent attitude which, properly administered will lead to 'perfect non-attachment' (Vivekenanda 1964: 245-246).[10] The pious sentiment on the towel, is, like all things connected with the Khannas, merely for show, an ironic indication of the Khanna's material advantage over the others.

Prem's resentment over the new problems of married life and his irritation towards Indu during the early days of their life together is transformed to a protective concern for his wife:

> He was full of tenderness for her. The fact that he knew about the insecurity that would forever threaten them and she did not, made him feel very loving towards her. He wanted to keep her innocent and unsuspecting, and to protect her.
>
> (TH: 124)

Prem's emotional development is clear in these lines but the movement from *pistis* to *gnosis*, from illusion to reality does not have comedy's liberating effect (AC: 169). More than ever Prem is aware of the insecurity that will forever threaten them. His attempt to be accepted as a respectable householder when he challenges Mr. Chaddha for embarrassing him in front of his students backfires when Mr. Khanna acting on the older teacher's complaints of Prem's inefficiency, warns him of dismissal if Prem is 'not worthy of his hire' (TH: 119-121). Rejected on all sides and threatened with unemployment, Prem's *gnosis* consists of the fact that 'people ... do not love their neighbours at all':

> He had to be like Sohan Lal, quiet, patient, self-effacing, in the effort not to come under displeasurable notice; constantly alert not to offend.
>
> (TH: 124)

The early conflicts between Indu, forthright and uncomplicated, and Prem, grave and deliberate, provide some of the novel's best examples of

ironic wit as Jhabvala highlights Prem's conflicting emotions: to be the serious husband in front of Indu yet needing her company and friendship; irritated by her defiant manner yet conscious of his physical feelings for her. From Indu Prem expects the same deference and respect his own mother showed her husband. His thoughts on the matter reveal his high expectations of Indu and of the respect due to him:

> As far as he was aware, his mother had not been in the habit of defying his father .... She had prefaced all her remarks to Prem and his sisters with 'Your father says', and to outsiders she said, 'The Principal says'. In the house everybody had had to tip-toe past his study, and at mealtimes he always had some special dish cooked in which no one else had been allowed to share. Prem had sometimes envied him his position of comfort and dignity and had looked forward to being married himself so that he could occupy a similar one. But Indu, it seemed, was not aware of the privileges due to him.
>
> (TH: 28)

Deprived of the 'privileges' due to him Prem resorts to playing the role of 'stern and authoritative' husband with Indu even as he is distracted by her physical attributes. An argument over his mother's visit coinciding with Indu's return to her family home has Prem thinking his wife 'stupid' yet the exchange occurs even as Prem continues with the 'discovery' of the stranger he has been married to:

> She was pouting. She pushed out her full lower lip and half closed her lids over her eyes. Her eyes were her best features; they were very large and took up most of her face which was small though set on a long neck.
> .....
> 'If your mother knew that my mother was coming to visit us, she would not want you to come.' He kept looking at her. Really, he thought, she is not bad-looking.
>
> (TH: 23)

On another occasion, Indu's 'unrefined' language to the washerman is the occasion for Prem to lecture on womanly behaviour:

> You are the lady of the household, you must behave with dignity and win everyone's respect.
>
> (TH: 34)

Prem's stern manner is incongruously paired with his thoughts as he longs to 'laugh', 'talk' and 'confide' in Indu, and with the way he notices how 'her hands moved so swiftly and her bangles jingled and a strand of hair which had escaped her big coil fluttered merrily on her cheek'(TH: 34). The grim reminder of a wife's duties is ironically followed by Prem's wish that Indu would lift her arms for a second time so that he would be able to see 'the soft skin on the inside of her arm'.

The Khanna tea-party, a meeting of householders, affords an ironic view of Prem's untiring efforts to acquire the regard of elders more concerned with their own importance and well-being than with offering any guidance for new family-men. The text captures Prem's disappointment at his first failure and his endearing doggedness, in its use of words that echo Prem's deliberate, elaborate plans for the second attempt. So far neither Prem's behaviour nor that of the older group allows the reader to expect any degree of 'subtlety' that Prem so strongly believes in:

> The first attempt had to be regarded in the light merely of groundwork, on which he must now start building an edifice of persuasion. But these things, he told himself, had above all to be done with subtlety and tact; and what occasion better for subtlety and tact than at a tea-party?
>
> (TH: 38)

Indu's over-eating of Mrs. Khanna's sweetmeats throws Prem out of joint. Overcome by embarrassment at Indu's behaviour, Prem's resolution to impress the company with 'something poignant and striking' fails. Yet inspite of the failure to prove himself 'an intelligent and deep-thinking' young man the episode offers poignant proof of Prem's commitment and capacity for love. Jhabvala juxtaposes Mr. Chaddha's unsubtle flattery and empty rhetorics on 'goodwill and good-fellowship', 'a sense of comradeship' and 'sense of loyalty' with the actual expression of these

ideals in Prem's behaviour. Even as he looks on with horror at Indu, his fears are that the others may not realize the cravings of a pregnant woman:

> Mr. Chaddha modulated his voice to one of softness and affection. 'What more beautiful feeling can there be than one of friendship?' .. The other lecturers breathed a long-drawn 'Ah' in appreciation. Prem's 'Ah' came a little later; all his feelings were with Indu .... He leant forward and pretended to be intent on Mr. Chaddha. Yet he thought more about how he would like to explain the situation to Mrs. Khanna, so that she would not think Indu had never been to a tea-party before and did not know how to behave in society .... that Indu's behaviour was due not to lack of breeding but to natural causes.
>
> (TH: 75)

Thus despite the failure of his grandiose plans, Prem's self-delusion is that of the immature well-meaning youth rather than that of the indifferent and complacent alazons. Later on in the story with a more experienced, less idealistic Prem, the narrative maintains the wry, amused tone eliciting our liking for Prem, emphasizing his pride and confidence within the household he has created. The description of Prem's behaviour and feelings when he finally receives a letter from Indu captures the touching happiness of the young man who has finally achieved some success as householder. Prem's resolution to find ways to support his family is combined with the physical pleasure of thinking about Indu and anticipating her return:

> He lay on his bed at home, under the two Cupids, and frowned with anxiety. But the anxiety was deliberate and he enjoyed it. It made him feel responsible. He thought about asking Mr. Khanna for a rise in salary and ... Mr. Siegal for a reduction in rent ... both these tasks must be achieved before Indu returned. Then he got up and ... took out the piece of pink satin .... She ... would sew it into a blouse for herself; and on special occasions ... she would put it on and it would fit tight and gleaming over her breasts. He smiled to himself and shut the drawer. Then he got back to serious thoughts.
>
> (TH: 96)

In ironic comedy, the redeemed society is in its infancy, 'swaddled and smothered' by the society it should replace (AC: 185). In the same manner, Prem's ambition, youthful fervour and sincerity to fulfil his duties are unnoticed and stifled by uncaring elders. When Prem lives up to the alazon's standards, as when he reports a student for whistling at a girl and proceeds to give a self-righteous lecture on discipline and duties, then he is allowed temporary recognition by the humorous society (TH: 49). Generally however, Prem's delicacy of nature, his sensitivity to others' feelings and his strong sense of duty exclude him from the humorous society. Yet Prem is the novel's only effective householder, neither 'manifestly unsuccessful and unconfident' as Sohan Lal, nor as unconcerned a father as Mr. Siegal. In his attempts (and failures) to fulfil his duties, Prem achieves the Hindu ideal of heroic virtue. The Gita extols those who carry out the duties and rules of conduct appropriate to their class and kinship structures. When Arjuna is reluctant to go into battle against his kinsmen, Krishna reminds him of his duty as a warrior:

> Look to your duty;
> do not tremble before it;
> nothing is better for a warrior
> than a battle of sacred duty.
>
> (BG: 2, V3, p. 34)

Prem trembles before his duty not from a lack of responsibility but out of inexperience and a fear of the lack of resources for the financial demands of householdership. Yet despite the material shortcomings, Prem is a loving husband, a responsible provider, a patient, filial son and a true friend. Between the younger Prem's exaggerated sense of position and role-playing and the older Prem's inevitable submission to the humorous society and some 'corruption' of his ideals, there are many examples of Prem's profound sense of *dharma*.

True to his father's exhortation 'You must strive, strive and strive again!', to 'Put all your strength into doing the things you don't like to do' (TH: 9), Prem spurred by a letter from Indu, plans to write a letter to Mr. Khanna for an increase in salary. It is an episode that highlights Prem's sense of duty and awareness of obligations, of his love for Indu and the indifference of the humorous society in the way Prem is treated by Mrs. Khanna when he delivers the letter. Prem's plan to formulate a petition is explained to Sohan Lal:

> I will have to write in official style to make him see that my demand is just, but I also want to be personal and touching, so that his feelings will be softened.
>
> (TH: 104)

The narrative objectively follows Prem's composition of his letter, capturing at the same time the mixture of confidence, worry and humility. Only the word 'crescendo' does not belong to Prem but it forms part of the amused, kindly tone of the narrative voice:

> He liked his beginning, which was straightforward and factual: 'I am a lecturer in your college.' From 'there he went on to define the duties of a lecturer, ending up with, and so, is it not right to presume that a lecturer's great responsibility to Youth and Learning entitles him to higher salary than is given him?' After that he became official again ('I submit hereby my request for rise in salary') but followed it up with an account of his personal history. From then on he hinted rather than stated directly, 'You also must have learnt from experience, sir, that when a man marries, some other things follow ... and ended up in a crescendo of personal appeal: 'I stand before you with folded hands and trust in your goodness that you will not turn aside the appeal of one who has only recently started out in life and is in need of assistance and kind thoughts from his elders.' After reading this over several times, he added 'and betters'.
>
> (TH: 104)

'Prem' means 'love', and it is fitting that it is the love between Prem and Indu, one built on their sexual harmony, that makes Prem more confident and self-assured in facing his householder duties. Providing Indu with comfort, happiness and protection from fear and worry become the

focus and immediate priority for Prem. Married life and sensual love are means to the higher ideal of spiritual devotion (Radhakrishnan 1980, 60-61), and Prem's growth through married love reflects a step in the right direction. In portraying the couple's delight in each other, Jhabvala turns to traditional stories of sublime lovers in the pastoral tradition like the Git Govinda (Gooneratne 1983: 127).(11) Prem and Indu are passionately reunited outdoors on a starlit night (TH: 118). Later the coming of the rains sees Prem and Indu frolicking on the roof of their home (TH: 130). The aura of virility that Prem exudes and Indu's 'swelling splendour' of 'belly and breasts' recalls the passionate love-sports of the amorous Hindu gods.

With Indu's companionship and with his increased confidence as husband, protector and lover, Prem develops characteristics of the eiron: acceptance of the things he cannot change, and a pragmatic approach to his abilities and limitations (AC: 226). Indu's return and their joyous reunion bring decisive action on Prem's part. A letter is sent to his sister in Bangalore to facilitate his mother leaving Delhi, allowing for greater intimacy between the newly-weds. Prem's despatch of his mother, like his gift to her of a silk blouse piece meant for Indu, is part of his loving nature, his growing confidence and maturity and the new householder's calm eiron-like acceptance of circumstances. In the *Gita*, the issue for Arjuna is neither in winning the kingdom nor in not winning the kingdom lost to the enemies. 'The only relevant question is whether one does the work which is his to do .... Only the dharma act is right' (Organ 1974: 161). Worldly and spiritual self-identity help Arjuna to fulfil his duties. Prem, as Indu's husband and a potential father, discovers the basis of his self-identity and with this is able to carry out some of the duties of the householder. Despite the submission to a position of anonymity and even victimisation in the humorous society, Prem attains the knowledge and ability to carry out that which matters most.

Two important incidents towards the end of the novel highlight its portrayal of the two opposite views of Prem, that of the submissive, poor householder in the humorous society, and that of the responsible young family man who, self-aware and capable of love, is a better householder than his older, materially successful counterparts. As mentioned earlier these two incidents are partly comedy's scenes of joyous integration and as in Jhabvala's two earlier ironic comedies, are ambivalently presented, mirroring the ironies of the strength of the humorous society. Prem is the special young man differentiated from the other alazons by his charity and strong sense of responsibility, but we are made aware of the oppressed householder surviving only by 'submitting and propitiating to the other side'.

The first incident is Prem and Indu's visit to the village of Mehrauli for Sohan Lal's brother's wedding. It is a happy occasion, an 'outing' for the newly-weds who have discovered their love for each other.(12) We read of Prem's pride in Indu, particularly 'the swelling splendour of her pregnant belly and breasts'. At the wedding Prem notes with pleasure the other women's 'deference' to Indu's state, how she is 'solicitously' helped. Prem and Indu's position as established married couple is further established with Prem's self-assured 'superior knowledge' of the bridegroom's feelings and fears. Harmonious community accord is supported by Mehrauli's pastoral beauty, and the non-worldly delights it offers. The countryside is 'wet and juicy with the night's rain. The air looked liquid and the birds too sang like water .... raindrops trembled like dew on the freshened leaves' (TH: 130). Yet Prem however rejects it all:

> He knew that he did not want to come and live here .... To have done so would have been a step backward for him; almost like going back to Ankhpur.
>
> (TH: 131)

To reject the delights of Mehrauli for the benefits Delhi offers, 'buses and tongas and coffee houses and many cinemas', appears at first as mere alazony. However Prem's reference to Ankhpur alerts us to the fact that the choice is that of the newer perceptive eiron who realizes Mehrauli and Ankhpur are insufficient for the householder's needs. Ankhpur belongs to the carefree, celibate days of his *bramacharya* stage, synonymous with the security of his mother's caring and the reflected prestige of his headmaster father. Mehrauli with is pastoral delights is a potential refuge for Prem's entry into the third *asrama*, the *vanaprasthya*, when the responsibilities of home management and family vocation are gradually eased off for the spiritually orientated, semi-retirement of the forest-dweller or hermit. Prem and Indu's brief integration in Mehrauli socially and emotionally, is an indication of their marital happiness and the joys of shared responsibilities of family life. The fact remains however that for Prem the main goals of this stage of his life are for *artha* (the goal of material possessions and physical comforts) and of *kama* of love and other hedonic satisfactions. Prem's pride at 'having established himself in a big town like Delhi' is in reality a poignant coming to terms with the limited material possessions a modest, unsuccessful teacher can command in a society of 'the Khannas and the Siegals and Mr. Chaddha and his students and doctors' bills and income tax forms and all the other horrors the world had in store for him' (TH: 125). It is an exchange of the 'cheap rent' and clean air of Mehrauli for the physical comforts affordable by the Rajs and Prems of Delhi: bare and empty upstairs portions of houses or Government-provided hutments with poor plumbing, located in remote housing estates.

An ambivalence also marks Jhabvala's portrayal of the lunch at Prem and Indu's home with Raj and his family. Prem's feeling that 'there is something solid and respectable in a family party' is seen in his joy at playing host and his pride in Indu's cooking. Yet there is ironic

counterpoint in the fact that Prem has only the dour, hyper-critical Raj as guide, model and possible confidante. Raj's refrain on the high cost of raising a family serves as a constant reminder of the constraints under which Prem must carry out his worldly *dharma*. Prem's tolerant submission to Raj's reminders is not unlike the 'anxious deference' and 'courteous flattery' shown by lesser alazons to their richer and more influential counterparts. The lunch portrays the simple joy of two householders engaged in the ritual of *nara yajna* (man worship), that is 'the obligation each day to honour ties of fellowship with humans by a gesture of hospitality to guests, to friends, to a stranger, or even to a beggar' (Organ 1974: 206). It is undercut by the fact that the high cost of bus fares, rents, children and 'profiteering' landlords will be central concerns of Prem's life. There is the possibility that Prem may become as complaining and hyper-critical as Raj, or as bowed and oppressed as Sohan Lal.

Two things however predominate in Jhabvala's ironic view of Prem's quest for householdership and the accommodation of that ideal in modern India. These determine the novel's status as comedy for Jhabvala's ironical wit focusses on these two aspects of Prem's character to endear the eager householder to us. The first is Prem's love for his arranged wife; the other is the touching dedication and seriousness of the young husband towards his duties. The comic ironies of role-playing as stern husband and the actions Prem undertakes as responsible adult, provide some of the best examples of the workings of Jhabvala's irony. Equally important, they strengthen the philosophical basis of the novel. In the Hindu view of life, marriage is a means to spiritual growth with sensual love sublimated eventually into self-forgetful devotion (Radhakrishnan 1980: 60). Prem and Indu's love refines and enhances and allows for the possibility of the third *asrama* when together their 'attitudes toward occupation, profession, and family affairs undergo change' and they

'retire more and more to themselves' (Organ 1974: 209). Also despite the failures and concessions he has to make to the humorous society, Prem is a true Hindu who achieves self-identity and does not tremble before his duty. At the end householdership for Prem is not the 'burden on the back' that Sohan Lal and Raj have to bear; neither is it Mr. Siegal's complete lack of interest in the welfare of his family, nor the Khannas preoccupation with money and false community concern. For Jhabvala's unpretentious protagonist, the lover and *grihastha* whose sense of duty remains unshaken, the end goal of the *asrama* concept and that of all Hindus, liberation, is possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COMIC IRONIES: ESMOND IN INDIA, GET READY FOR BATTLE, A BACKWARD PLACE

Introduction

The novels that make up the set of Jhabvala's comic ironies were written in the middle period of the author's residence in India, a time when the initial euphoria with the sights and sounds of the foreign land subsided to a greater disillusioning awareness of the poverty and social ills of the country. Jhabvala's focus on the comic incongruities of Indian family life in the ironic comedies develops into an ironic examination of Indian manners, of the consequences of modernity on its people and in Esmond in India and A Backward Place, the effect India has on Westerners. These novels may be seen as Jhabvala's attempts, through her art, to 'adapt oneself to the differences between Europe and India' (AEI: 9). They show, even more clearly than in the ironic comedies, the tensions that arise from the opposing influences India has on the foreigner: on the one hand 'Indian democracy', 'Indian music' and 'Indian intellectuals' and on the other, poverty, death from starvation, and the maiming of children for beggary (AEI: 8). Comic aspects of character and situation and glimpses of the vivacity of a country and its people provide relief for the darkening irony of these works.

The novels in this group are more homogeneous than the group of three early comedies. Married protagonists provide the central action: marital ties, domestic disharmony and different views of married love are presented in all three novels. The gradual crumbling of family bonds is seen as conflicts arise when family members, caught in a see-saw of tradition and modernity, attempt to reconcile personal and family interests or spiritual and worldly demands. It has often been said that Jhabvala's forte is the female psyche and in these novels women characters are central to the story. Very often they, like Sarla Devi in Get Ready for Battle and Judy in A Backward Place are subject to the conflicting

pulls of family duty and self-individuation and the process of attempting some kind of reconciliation comes under ironic scrutiny.

Family disharmony is portrayed against a background of India ten years or so after Independence, established with self-rule and international relations but burdened with the ills of modernization and capitalism. The nature of the progress achieved after the ideals and sacrifice of the Gandhi days and the revolutionary struggle is unobtrusively examined and criticized in the crass materialism and hypocrisy portrayed in the novels. An aspect of modernity and one that looks forward to the subsequent novels of Westerners in India of Jhabvala's last phase in her adopted country, is the examination of the effect India has on the lives of Westerners. This is located in the conflicts that arise out of the mixed marriages of Esmond and Gulab in Esmond in India, of Bal and Judy, and a group of Westerners in A Backward Place. The Western voices, at various stages of the cycle of attitudes towards India add another dimension to the characteristic tension of the positive and negative faces of India already apparent in the early comedies. The Westerners' experiences of India provide instances of comedy and something close to tragedy. Some of these show a disgust with India as tangible as those that acknowledge her spirituality and an influence that 'strengthens human virtue, blesses and guards it' (Gooneratne 1983: 166).

Esmond in India is Jhabvala's third novel: chronologically and in its story of a young Indian girl's romance, it should fall within the first group of early novels of Indian family life. However the darker ironic tone of the novel places it more appropriately within the group of ironies rather than the comedies. The novel moves away from the amusing, often hilarious problems of the generation-gap and romantic youngsters of To Whom She Will and The Nature of Passion and the positive picture of young married love in The Householder. Instead, the emphasis, marked by a

darker ironic stand is on the false romanticism of the young Shakuntala, the preoccupation with prestige and position among the Delhi elite, and Esmond's violent hatred for India with the serious implication for the futures of the two Indian women he abandons.

As works of first-phase irony, or satire of the low-norm, each of these novels portrays 'a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable' (AC: 226). The world of first-phase irony is one in which 'society will, if given the chance, behave more or less like Caliban's Setebos in Browning's poem' (AC: 226): behaviour like that of a vindictive jealous god who ruled the world through envy and tormented it through selfishness, pride and malice (Drew 1970: 151).(1) It is a world that links up with the corresponding comic phase in its portrayal of an 'upside down world dominated by humours and ruling passions' (AC: 227). We see various manifestations of the power of the established but absurd society. Jhabvala satirizes not only those who wield power but minor alazons who perpetuate follies and crimes through their weakness and delusions. The eirons too do not escape irony. By the very nature of their roles they are too isolated and too few in number to effect change in a society 'controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law' (AC: 169).

There seems to be a more panoramic view of Indian society and Indian manners in these comic ironies almost as if the writer is able to detach herself from a (more) personal involvement and look at her subject from a distance. In the comedies, the central figures of the humorous society - the Rai Bahadur, Radha, Lalaji - are larger-than-life figures. Even little Prem looms large among the other householders. In the comic ironies the central alazons share the stage with the eirons and there is a mix of profiteers, incompetents, degenerates, losers, sycophants and snobs. In these ironies, the humorous society remains undisplaced in the sense of the strength and permanence of the values of the society centred

round widespread materialism and worldliness. There is thus a noticeable difference between the comedies with their colourful, deluded (often endearing) blockers round whom the unredeemed society revolves and the diminished alazons of the ironies. This feature of the second group of novels is matched with an over-all ironic point of view that is darker and with ironic strategies that are more impersonal and sophisticated.

The diminution of the alazon protagonists does not however suggest a corresponding lessening of their power, in fact the effects of alazony are widespread and pervasive and the injustices, follies, and crimes of the humorous society remain 'permanent'. As such there is a focus on the fate of the eirons, the strength they possess and the restrictions they face within the deluded society. Sometimes they are the novels' central characters. Vishnu in Get Ready for Battle and Judy in A Backward Place are heroes of the ironic mode, their 'power of action' considerably limited by the constraints of the humorous society. They are however heroes of works of first-phase irony which retain aspects of the comic world, as such they have that degree of freedom not allowed the pharmakos or victim figure of ironic fiction of Frye's later phases.

Various aspects of the eiron of low-norm satire may be seen in Jhabvala's comic ironies. As good, if minority presences in a corrupt world, the eirons are important to the comic ironies for despite their limited triumphs, they show the possibility of survival in a world of injustices, what Ihab Hassan refers to as the eirons' 'uneasy truce with necessity' (Hassan 1961: 123). The eirons' honesty, goodness and flexible pragmatism are contrasted with the vanity and self-seeking of the alazons. The eirons' 'clairvoyant knowledge of human nature' in themselves and others (AC: 226) is ironically, an asset that isolates them from the rest of the absurd society disallowing complete integration. Journeys out of the humorous society sometimes become necessary. The eirons here, unlike the young eiron-protagonists of the ironic comedies

are older and independent enough to accept a degree of isolation when complete disassociation is not possible. Courageous and flexible they are prepared to move beyond the dictates of tradition and conventional wisdom. Yet, with the mythos' tendency to imbue every human act with irony, even the futures of these eirons are uncertain and ambivalently presented. The narrative hints at possible conflict between the eiron-alazon couples of Vishnu and Mala in Get Ready for Battle, Bal and Judy in A Backward Place, and in Esmond in India, between Uma and her returning daughter Gulab.

With the ironic comedies 'the sense of absurdity ... arises as a kind of backfire or recall *after* the work has been seen' (my italics) (AC: 226). The comic world predominates and the ironic undercutting is amusing and witty rather than sharply critical. In each novel of the second group however there is a general movement towards 'a sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity'. The stronger sense of the immediacy of 'bondage' and 'frustration' comes with the darker ironic exposure of the deluded society and the difficulties of survival for the eirons. The ambivalent endings of the early comedies are even more pronounced in these early ironies. There are therefore slight overtones of sparagmos, the archetypal theme of irony and satire when there is a sense 'that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world' (AC: 192). Yet it is important to remember that the pragmatic flexibility of Vishnu of Get Ready for Battle and Judy of A Backward Place allow, despite the undercutting by the ironic narrative, some degree of 'effective action' and even a possibility of 'heroism'. It is in Esmond in India that the sense of sparagmos is perhaps more noticeable in the way Esmond flees from the country, his cruelty towards Gulab and the suggestion that different codes of behaviour operate for the Englishman in India. Sparagmos operates fully in a society of alazons and pharmakos and in the world of the comic-satiric ironies, especially of Get Ready for

Battle and A Backward Place feisty eirons can still survive. In Esmond in India where the eirons can lead separate lives from the alazons, paradoxically where their 'balance' is least threatened by the humorous society, signs of sparagmos occur.

The victim figure of the more serious phases of irony makes a first, muted appearance in the character of Sarla Devi in Get Ready for Battle. It is important to remember however that Sarla Devi's religious convictions and her non-attachment to the mundane world qualifies her victim position. She is a kind of victim figure in that despite her high principles and commitment to helping the poor, she fails to elicit help and support. At the same time however her qualities serve to highlight the hollow ambitions of the humorous society and its inability to recognize heroic or virtuous action.

In spite of their darker tone, the comic ironies boast a striking number of eirons who are alert, undeluded and morally aware. A number of them are pious, showing different degrees of renunciation of the worldly life. They serve as foils to the worldly, the rich and affluent like Har Dayal of Esmond in India, Gulzari Lal in Get Ready for Battle and Gupta in A Backward Place. Minority figures in a corrupt world, each eiron is a kind of moral yardstick by which the crimes of the absurd society are exposed. There is an almost chronological increase in spiritual awareness and sense of *dharma* in the pious women of these three novels. The more flexible and tolerant, less self-aware Uma of Esmond in India develops to the more self-aware ascetic figure of Sarla Devi who though more spiritual is isolated and ineffective. In A Backward Place, society's worldliness is counteracted by the simple faith of an old woman Bhuaji who contributes physically and spiritually to the well-being of her extended family. Even the old woman in Jhabvala's short story 'The Old Lady' (discussed in this chapter) does not have the harmonizing influence on the family that Bhuaji offers in A Backward Place.

The religious and traditional concepts that frame the novels are indications of Jhabvala's more critical stand and a more pessimistic ironic perspective of the fundamental absurdity in human affairs. In Esmond in India, religious and cultural rules governing a wife's duties towards her husband, and a famous Sanskrit drama *Shakuntala*, on love, its trials and joyful reconciliation are the ironic foils for a story about a failed marriage, and an inexperienced sentimental girl who has a one-night affair. In Get Ready for Battle the *Gita's* ideal for selfless action without regard for the fruits of action is the central philosophical reference for Jhabvala's portrayal of the materialistic motivations of the characters. In A Backward Place *bhakti* (devotion) and religious acceptance and spiritual serenity are the underlying Hindu ideals for a novel that centres round Indians too taken up with the problems of worldly existence or with Westerners attempting to survive in India. The use of these concepts, to highlight aspirations and delusions reveals a darkening, pessimistic point of view of life, one that sees the opposition between our altruistic aspirations and a fundamental egotism and self-love (Muecke 1969: 144).

Two general ideals encompass these specific concepts. The first, already important in her earlier novels, is *dharma*. Action should be done from a sense of duty without regard for the results of the action. The dharma teachings of the *Gita* stress that a man must act out his role, fulfilling his duties unmindful of the results:

> Man is so constituted that he must act. The important issue is the motivation of his action. Only the dharma act is right.
>
> (Organ 1974: 161)

Jhabvala's ironic viewpoint exposes the often questionable uses to which dharma as a duty ethic is put; it looks at the conflict of duties and the rationalisations that ensue and it exposes the relegation of duties

despite affirmations of responsibility. Related to the idea of *dharma* and forming the second component of the traditional framework is the religious concept of *atmansiddhi*, the perfecting of the essential nature of man:

> Atmansiddhi is a programmatic telos, a direction for moving, not a goal for reaching. The Perfecting Man is the reality to be attained; the Perfected Man is the ideal to be approximated.
>
> (Organ 1974: 33)

The framing principle of *dharma* differentiates those capable of detached action, of *bhakti* and of spiritual striving and those who misuse the broad and tolerant *sadhana* (the notion of the full personal, spiritual and social development of an individual) that Hinduism develops for its followers. In these novels the creativity behind the *dharma* principle is as clearly seen as the blind obedience or convenient excuse for self-interest to which the ideal is reduced to.

The techniques and strategies of verbal irony that Jhabvala uses (that which Muecke calls 'being ironical' [Muecke 1969: 4]), are generally more sophisticated than those used in the comedies. In the earlier works Jhabvala uses the technique of a narrative that combines a mimicking of the character's thoughts and words with a narrative voice. The tone of the narrative voice though critical is comic-ironic and benign rather than darkly pessimistic or condemnatory. In the later groups of novels, the same technique is continued but the irony is darker and the ironic narrative voice less intrusive, consisting mainly of idiom-mimicking that moves sometimes into a mimicking of stream-of-consciousness. By operating through a character rather than on her, the text reveals more effective ironic disclosures of discrepancies between what the character sees or infers and what the reader understands of the situation. The view of a general or universal irony of 'impossible situations' is seen in the way Jhabvala presents dramatic conflicts between individuals. She follows a certain situation by combining an impersonal, objective narrative with one

that reveals incongruities and discrepancies of motives and actions. The effect is a constant shifting in the readers attitude to the two protagonists as first one, then the other appears to deserve sympathy or criticism. This is apparent in episodes between Gulab and Esmond, and to a lesser extent between Judy and Bal. On the whole, as with the first three comedies, the readers are actively involved in the ironic play in the text, relishing the position of superiority the narrative voice allows them through the ironical strategies. Yet the detached, objective tone of not taking sides shows the beginnings of an 'eironic' narrative which dissembles and teases and refuses to take sides.

These then are the main features of Jhabvala's early ironies, satirical exposures of materialism and false idealism, augmented by a traditional framework that provides the ideals and standards which are (somehow) adapted, changed, misused or forgotten. The portrayal of discord, alienation and loneliness is relieved only by rare instances of genuine love, worldly or otherwise. The comedy arising out of the satirical exposures is constantly balanced by the more pervasive, darker ironic scrutiny of the priorities of the humorous society. All three novels end at crucial points when the consequences of decisions made will have to be faced. The unredeemed society is not displaced; unable to integrate within the larger society, the eirons survive on mutual dependence and differing versions of *dharma*-fulfilment. Uma and Ram Nath in Esmond in India, Vishnu and Joginder Nath his business partner in Get Ready for Battle, and Judy with Sudhir and Bhuaji in A Backward Place.

Esmond In India (1958)

The association and conflicts between four households form the action of Esmond in India. There is the rich and Westernized household of Har Dayal and Madhuri with their newly-graduated daughter Shakuntala, their son Amrit and his wife Indira, and their son Raj who is away studying at Cambridge. There is the household of the widowed Uma with her servant Bachani and a resident Swami. Then there is Uma's brother Ram Nath and his household with his wife Lakshmi and their son Narayan who is a doctor in a remote rural area. Finally there is Esmond and Gulab's household and Ravi their son. Various links connect these families. Madhuri, Har Dayal and Lakshmi come from similar prosperous land-owning families from Uttar Pradesh. Har Dayal and Ram Nath were once students at Cambridge. Madhuri cannot forget the dishonour done to her family by Gulab's marriage to the Englishman Esmond after being promised to Amrit. Shakuntala, once a school-mate of Gulab, freshly introduced to adult life, finds what she believes is true love with Esmond and spends a night with him while on a tour of Delhi's historical sites. Lakshmi resents her poverty and Madhuri's wealth seeing in all this a grossly unfair distribution of rewards for Ram Nath's sacrifices before Independence and Har Dayal's selfish uninvolvement. Lakshmi, Uma and Ram Nath however prepare to betroth Shakuntala with Narayan when the latter writes to his father requesting a bride. Uma strives to take Gulab and Ravi away from their unhappy life with Esmond. As a widow she looks to Ram Nath for brotherly support but they are also linked by memories of their political struggles for Independence together with Uma's husband. Har Dayal delicately refuses Ram Nath's proposal of marriage between the children. He engages Esmond to tutor Shakuntala in Indian literature, an attempt to enrich her cultural knowledge, and to prepare her for betrothal to a more worthy candidate. The novel ends with Gulab's return to her mother's house after being molested by a servant, Narayan's imminent return to Delhi on his leave, and Shakuntala's secret dreams of marriage to Esmond after his

divorce from Gulab. At the same time her family plans for her betrothal to Professor Bhatnagar's son from overseas and Esmond thinks with happy anticipation of the sea-journey to England with Betty his English girlfriend and freedom from Gulab, Shakuntala and India.

Despite the novel's title, the story of Esmond in India is part of the larger portrayal of Indian manners of the late fifties and sixties. Esmond's unhappiness and disillusionment with life in India reflect 'the shabbiness and poverty' apparent to the outsider, but this poverty is due in part to the corruption, self-seeking and indifference of the rich and influential with whom Esmond associates. Although the novel begins and ends with Shakuntala, from her expectations of romance to her blissful afternoon shopping with Esmond, the affairs of the older protagonists are equally important. Shakuntala's attempt at bohemian independence is as much a feature of the new India as is Madhuri and Har Dayal's worldliness, Ram Nath's withdrawal from life, Uma's piety and Narayan's selfless work for a new India. Shakuntala's romance with Esmond captures not only the pretensions and illusions of her society but also the exploitation and injustices present in India ten years after another kind of bondage.

First phase irony, which Frye calls the 'satire of the low norm', corresponds to first phase comedy in which there is no displacement of the humorous society. The four main components that make up the action of Esmond in India acknowledge the permanence of 'a world full of injustices and follies' (AC: 226). Frye states that the 'distinction between an ironic comedy and a comic satire ... is tenuous but not quite a distinction,without a difference' (AC: 177). The four components of Esmond in India reveal the main differences between ironic comedies and comic ironies. Firstly there is the impossibility of integration, however ambivalent (as in the three comedies), between eirons and alazons; secondly the characters belong to the ironic mode 'inferior in power or

intelligence' to the reader, caught in a permanent world of 'bondage, frustration or absurdity' (AC: 34).

The first of these components is the Shakuntala-Esmond relationship, an affair between two alazons characterized by false romanticism on the one hand and boredom and frustration on the other. At the novel's conclusion there is irony in Esmond and Shakuntala's complacent ignorance of the real state of affairs: he of his cowardice in leaving his family behind, she at the impossibility of a romantic future with her 'Shelley'. There is a hint of general dramatic irony in the way Esmond and Shakuntala feel themselves to be free agents of their own fate yet are victims of irony because their attitudes and actions have been determined and will continue to be determined by an absurd society (Muecke 1969: 137). The second component is the superficiality and insincerity that mark relationships, particularly between married couples. The third component is the manners and priorities of the urban upper-class and finally the action and concerns of less worldly characters like Ram Nath, Uma and Narayan. These four aspects of the novel provide the setting for the ironic examination of the attitudes and motivation of the humorous society and the impossibility of concord or even understanding between alazons and eirons, between spiritual and material concerns and between the two worlds Esmond and Gulab represent.

The traditional framework is established through allusions to specific teachings in the Gita, on duty and sacrifice, to Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, a literary work with religious overtones inspired by the story of Shakuntala's marriage to King Dusyhanta, in the *Mahabharata*.(2) There are also allusions to specific standards of behaviour for Hindu women, particularly the Hindu wife. The actions and predicaments of the characters are thus seen against ideals, traditions and literature known to all Hindus; together they form a framework that enriches the work by association. In her earlier comedies Jhabvala used appropriately-chosen

names to highlight her characters' personalities: Prem whose name means 'love' lives up to his name, whilst Shanta, quiet and submissive for the sake of family harmony, deserves her name which means 'peace'. In the ironies the use of names to emphasize theme or character is continued but predominantly for ironic effect; characters seldom live up to their names.

In *Shakuntala*, King Dushyanta falls in love with Shakuntala, the adopted daughter of the sage Kanva. In the absence of Kanva from the hermitage, the Kind marries Shakuntala in the *gandharva* mode, that is by sanction of mutual desire. When Dushyanta has to return to his kingdom he leaves with Shakuntala a signet ring as pledge of their love and marriage, to be produced at the palace to gain admittance. Shakuntala's joy causes her to fall into a reverie; a proper welcome is not accorded to the visiting sage Durvasan who curses her saying that the person about whom she was so lost in thought would himself lose all thought of her. After pleas, the curse is mitigated, and the signet ring will restore remembrance.

Rejection and suffering await Shakuntala when the ring is lost in the waters of a pool and Dushyanta fails to recognize her. In a secret abode, Shakuntala and the son born to her, Bharata, live many years in loneliness and patient acceptance. Discovery of the ring by a fisherman causes Dushyanta to lament the loss of his wife. After years of searching and on Dushyanta's return from a great war, a benign deity reunites the king with Shakuntala (Walker 1968 vol. 1: 339-340).

Gulab and Esmond's marriage like that of Dushyanta and Shakuntala is a *gandharva* union, one based on mutual attraction and though not ranked as high as those in which personal inclination is subordinated, it is a perfectly recognized form in the Hindu law books (Radhakrishnan 1980: 61). Whilst Kalidasa's play celebrates conjugal love in the popular union-separation-reunion motif of much of Indian traditional love poems, the story of Gulab and Esmond is one of union and separation. The

separation provides a dark view of the sanctity of marriage so important in the Hindu law books. Towards the end, Esmond's revulsion with Gulab which stems from his revulsion of her Indianness, becomes synonymous with his hatred of all that is squalid in India, a hatred born of his inability to live the affluent life of Delhi:

> His senses revolted at the thought of her, of her greed and smell and languor, her passion for meat and for spices and strong perfumes. She was everywhere; everywhere he felt her — in the heat ... in the sugarcane juice ... which he could almost taste, filled with dust and germs and too much sweetness ... everywhere, she was everywhere, and he felt himself stifling in her softness and her warmth.
>
> (EI: 167)

The finality of the separation and Esmond as ironic parallel to Dushyanta is also seen in the way Esmond is overcome neither by grief nor remorse in leaving Gulab and Ravi. Our final view of Esmond is of him happily walking hand in hand with Shakuntala having decided to leave everything and head for England with Betty. The narrative captures the thoughts of a man with a new lease on life. At the same time the repetition of 'already', the attractive self-image projected, signals a narrative critical of the irresponsible, selfish man:

> Already he saw himself playing tennis with [Betty] on the ship, both of them radiant in white clothes .... Everything would be left behind and he would be happy all day long and light-hearted. Already he felt happy and light-hearted .... He threw back his fine golden head and felt happiness welling up inside him.
>
> (EI: 203)

Kalidasa's heroine is best known for her submission to cruel fate, her fortitude in raising her son alone and her unshakeable love for her husband. Jhabvala's heroine is placed in somewhat similar circumstances to the historical Shakuntala. She is alone with a son, and a husband who fails to remember their earlier love nor recall the beauty that once attracted him to her. Jhabvala's portrayal of Gulab's actions, her

interpretation of wifely duties and *dharma*, the strategies she takes to live with her situation present ironic, sometimes comic echoes of the legendary Shakuntala's perfect acceptance.

The wifely role is prominent in Hindu mythology and lawbooks (Jacobson and Wadley 1977). The role expectations of the wife are but part of the larger role expectations for women in relation to men and of the salvation and happiness of women as revolving around their virtue and chastity as daughters, wives and widows (Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 122). The main emphasis of these ideals, the guru-dev principle, that a husband is both god and teacher, is alluded to by Uma who has deep faith in the 'old books' and 'Ancient Epics':

> It is true, a husband is a woman's god, it is written in all our old books. And please also see how Sita submitted to Ram, she followed him into the wilderness and afterwards, when he banished her, she turned and went without one word though she was innocent.(3)
>
> (EI: 78)

In some respects, Gulab displays behaviour fitting of the ideal Sita-like Hindu wife. She is accepting and passive, submitting to what Uma considers are things that make her 'suffer': Esmond's restrictions on what to eat, prohibition of 'Indian' practices like having a child sleep with the mother, his contempt for her and his unfaithfulness. She rises to his defence at Uma's complaints and silently puts up with his physical abuse. She is chaste and virtuous, hiding her beauty from outsiders. In a kind of comic-ironic parallel to Sita she follows Esmond into a kind of exile putting up with his restrictions and the neat, modern cosmopolitan flat with its gaily striped furniture. She appears to be the Pativrata (literally one who fasts for her husband [Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 115]) in the tradition of faithful spouses like Sita, Sati, the faithful wife of the god Shiva, and Savitri who pleads with Yama, the fearsome lord of Death for her husband's life (Shirwadikar 1979: 49). She is thus like

Kalidasa's Shakuntala, in her faithful acceptance of one of the many injunctions in the Laws of Manu:(4)

> Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere) or devoid of good qualities, (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife.
>
> (quoted in Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 121)

This view of Gulab is however simultaneously undercut with irony as Jhabvala working within the traditional framework shows the limits of Gulab's Shakuntala-like fortitude. V.S. Naipaul writes of how the *dharma* ideal, especially in modern India, is an 'elastic' concept. At its noblest it combines self-fulfilment and truth to the self, but it can also be used 'to reconcile man to servitude and make them find in paralysing obedience the highest spiritual good' (Naipaul 1977: 169). Gulab's virtue has much to do with this unthinking submission to a higher authority that Ram Nath so strongly criticizes:

> So like animals, like cows .... Beat them ... maltreat them ... they will sit and look with animal eyes and never raise a hand to defend themselves, saying do with me what you will, you are my husband, my God, it is my duty to submit to my God.
>
> (EI: 78)

Pampered and treated like some precious deity by Uma, Gulab's passive personality finds submission congenial. Her refusal to leave Esmond appears to be perfect marital faithfulness but in fact arises out of 'a habit of thought' and 'instinct'. She is obsessively modest in public but slatternly and unguarded at home when she unconsciously reveals her splendid body to the manservant. When he later attempts to violate her she is again dictated by a combination of instinct and cultural conditioning. In describing her reaction the narrative presents a critical yet compassionate view of Gulab's Indianness in her instinctive recourse to religion and the laws that govern her life. The first law is that of a husband's rights, the second with his duty. Her decision to

leave arises from this failure of her husband to protect her. The third law relates to the fact the the defiled unworthy wife has to return to her own home. In Gulab's case this is as much custom as the only step left to take: she is an abandoned woman:

> It was a husband's right ... to do whatever he liked with his wife ... it was not her place to complain. But in return there was one thing, only one, that he owed her, and that was his protection: it was his duty to see that she was safe in his house .... Esmond had failed in that duty; so now he was no more her husband. Nor she his wife: since she considered herself defiled, she could not remain in his house any longer but had to return, as was the custom, to her own people.
>
> (EI: 199-200)

Those aspects of Gulab's behaviour that are subversive and unfitting of a dutiful wife should be seen against the Hindu ideals of motherhood. Whilst the wifely role is one of submission, the mother-figure is powerful and dominant for she is the one who gives, who must be obeyed, who loves and sometimes rejects (Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 124-125). The mother-figure in Hinduism is one of seeming contradictions: protector and destroyer, giver and taker, dangerous and benign. It is the mother aspect of Gulab who breaks the rules Esmond sets up. Gulab's behaviour echoes Uma's love for her offspring and her disregard for religious laws in constantly asking her daughter to leave her 'god'. Esmond considers Gulab's mind 'primeval' and there is indeed a sense of instinct for survival of herself and Ravi. She is alert always to Esmond's presence, even to his approaching footsteps. She is prepared with the appropriate untruths should any disobedience be discovered and most importantly she and Ravi feed on traditional, rich 'strengthening' Indian food when he is not around.

Gulab is daughter, wife and mother and her Indian femaleness (she is named after a rich, syrupy traditional sweetmeat) is captured in the episode of the attempted rape. As a woman she manifests duality: she is fertile and benevolent, yet on the other hand aggressive and malevolent.

This duality is derived from the Hindu idea of femaleness in which the female is first of all sakti (energy, power) and *prakrti* (nature). As 'power' and 'nature' and controlling her own sexuality the female is potentially destructive and malevolent. With the control of her sexuality transferred to men, the female is fertile and benevolent (Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 114-121). As the novel progresses Gulab is increasingly cut off from male relationships, is separated from her uncle by distance and choice and most important of all is rejected by her husband. As a woman increasingly without male control and more importantly, as mother rather than as wife, Gulab is in control of her sexuality and can manifest the malevolent, aggressive facet of her femaleness. Thus when she is sexually attacked, Jhabvala emphasizes the energy and power of her most exotic, languorous and self-indulgent female character:

> Then she flung back her head - mouth open, exposing all her sharp, strong teeth and the pink expanse of palate and tongue - before jerking it forward again to spit at him. She spat in one great spurt of rage ... all her softness and beauty had transformed into one ball of tigress fury.
>
> (EI: 199)

Jhabvala's first Westerner is Hans Loewe in The Householder, the comical young German who is simultaneously ravished by Indian women and Indian spirituality. Esmond Stillwood is Jhabvala's first important Western protagonist. The sombre tone of the novel arises from the sense of fear and desperation Esmond feels with Gulab and with India. Written before Jhabvala's visit to Europe, yet establishing a kind of blueprint for the physical and emotional horrors experienced by her later Western protagonists in India, it interestingly suggests the possibility that even by the late fifties, her first Western character was already feeling and articulating his creator's experience of India.

The name Jhabvala chooses for her first most important Western character, the Englishman Esmond, suggests an attempt to emphasize the

nature of Esmond's relationship with India. Esmond is an old-fashioned name most readily associated with William Thackeray's hero in his novel The History of Henry Esmond Esquire (1852). Thackeray's Esmond is an upright young man, a distinguished soldier, a successful businessman in the new colony of America and a devoted lover who eventually marries the widow of his guardian. There is every possibility that Jhabvala saw the ironic potential of naming Gulab's vicious, hysterical husband after Thackeray's successful hero. There is also the link perhaps in Thackeray's Victorian work and Jhabvala's Esmond, left over from the Victorian de-classed Englishman who administered India. Esmond himself is de-classed and dependent financially on various women and on Westernized Indians who are impressed by his knowledge of Indian literature. He is similar to his earlier counterparts in the snobbish aloofness he maintains and a code of behaviour not entirely *pukka* in England. Finally, the novel's title suggests a sense of impermanence in Esmond's relations with India and its people, as if, Esmond, in India, is but a phase in the Englishman's life.

Esmond's alazon role of 'impostor' may be seen from the different instances of incongruity between his image of himself and the reality of his position as revealed by Jhabvala's ironic wit. He is the deluded alazon who wants to live like the white sahib of the past but is financially unable to do so. To counteract this he devises moves and tactics that allow him the comfort of thinking he is a superior foreigner. His wit, charm and decorative skills are useful to cadge favours, appointments and free meals from foreign ladies and Westernized Indians. Yet he also serves a useful function:

> He taught them whatever they wished to learn: Hindustani or the History of Indian Art or the History of Indian Literature.
>
> (EI: 33)

The reference to the apparent compliancy in the first sentence only serves to emphasize the irony directed at Esmond who sees himself as a versatile expert of Indian culture and therefore able to take on any serious subject. It also reveals his dependence on the patronage and association with the Delhi elite. Just a little earlier we are told that Esmond 'rather enjoyed listening to himself speaking in Hindustani' only to be promptly reminded that 'his very bad but very careful Hindustani' is unintelligible to the Indians (EI: 33).

With ironic understatement that sharply criticizes both Esmond as well as the superficial society he moves in, the narrative notes:

> He had worked out a complete course on Indian culture, which was very useful to ladies who were only in the country for a short time but wished to take strong impressions back with them.
>
> (EI: 33)

To round off the brief introduction of the poseur and dilettante who is reduced to giving tuition and accompanying ladies on shopping sprees for a living, we learn that:

> He also sometimes acted as a kind of very superior guide, taking small parties to the Red Fort or the Jame Masjid, or to Kutb where in the winter they sat down to picnic lunches.
>
> (EI: 33)

The words ' very superior' denote Esmond's image of himself as well as the narrative voice pointing out the comic role-reversal of the Englishman as paid guide.

According to Frye, sparagmos is the most archetypal theme of irony and satire; it is 'the sense that heroism and effective action are absent and that confusion reigns over the world (AC: 192). Whilst sparagmos finds fuller expression in the third group of novels, there are aspects of sparagmos in Esmonds relation with his wife for he is the irresponsible husband and father who by Hindu or Western standards is ultimately

'unheroic'. The 'sense of effective action being disorganized or foredoomed to defeat' is seen in the clash between the two cultures. This is imaged in the European elegance of Esmond's flat and the smell and squalor of Gulab's room. Each side insists on holding on to its way of life resulting in a stalemate that eventually drives the outsider away. There is not only Esmond's decision to leave; the manner in which he will conduct his future echoes his exploitation of women. The narrative is critical even as it takes on the bantering tone of an Esmond who sees the possibility of a future where his 'life' and his 'personality' would not be 'strangled':

> Life was beginning again for him: he was young yet, young. There were three perfect weeks ahead of him on board ship. And then - oh, he was young, and he had wits, and charm, and one could always (couldn't one?) make an agreeable living in England. He had a sister there, and an aunt, and Betty was very well connected.
>
> (EI: 203)

As mentioned earlier, the ironic narrative that exposes Esmond's alazony can moderate to an impersonal, objective narrative. This highlights the pressures on Esmond, or on Gulab so that there are constant shifts between sympathetic and critical views of Esmond and Gulab and the reader feels alternately sympathetic and critical towards the two. One of the best examples of this is in the Esmond-Gulab confrontation after it is discovered that during his absence Gulab has left their house unattended to stay with Uma (EI: 164-167). The episode progresses on constant narrative shifts that allows us now to glimpse Esmond's suffering, now into Gulab's pain. When Gulab's pungent body smell maddens him, Esmond calls her 'Animal!' and begins to twist her flesh. The narrative detachedly presents Gulab's reaction:

> She had given only one cry of pain, which shock had forced out of her. After that she had kept quiet; she did not want to frighten Ravi.

(EI: 164)

Here our sympathies are with Gulab. At other times, there is understanding, if not sympathy, for Esmond as his loneliness focusses itself in a longing for 'a little blond boy with blue eyes who would be always gay and play rough - and - tumble games with his father' (EI: 165).(5) Sympathy is also felt as we read how he experiences 'a wave of disgust with himself and with her' in their inability to find 'some neutral ground to meet'; and when he strides out to the verandah and 'paced up and down there. Up and down [for] it was a very small space' (EI: 166). The episode ends with Gulab holding Ravi in the dark 'long after he had gone to sleep' whilst Esmond goes in search of Betty's 'quick, lively' mind and body. The effect of descriptions like this is to suggest life as generally and universally ironic, a series of predicaments that emphasize man's terrible loneliness.

The conflict within the Esmond-Gulab love-marriage suggests the benefits of arranged marriages, the efficacy of elders' decisions on the suitability of partners for their young people particularly for girls who have led sheltered lives like Gulab. Ram Nath's thoughts on arranging a marriage for Narayan capture the true ideals and benefits of arranged marriages:

> Yes, Ram Nath thought, he would have to choose the girl very carefully. She must be made fully aware of what sort of life was in store for her, so that she might be able to face it in imagination beforehand, consent, that is, to that life willingly and in full awareness, not find herself suddenly and unwillingly in it.
>
> (EI: 50)

For the humorous society however, arranged marriages rest more on questions of money, prestige and honour than suitability or concern for the girls' future. A Gulab, married into the Har Dayal household can pose its own special conflicts. Gulab's unhappy marriage which began with Esmond loving her Indianness, is like the other relationships and

aspirations portrayed or alluded to in Esmond in India, Shakuntala's love affair, the Independence struggle, the post-Independence aspirations, all symptomatic of the vanity of human wishes and the impossibility of confident anticipations of an unknowable future (Muecke 1969: 134).

In Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, Dushyanta is 'noble, exalted, brave, modest, ... prompt in answering the call of duty'. Shakuntala is 'attractive by youthful simplicity and artlessness, shy in her love ... a paragon of chastity' (Mirashi and Navlekar 1969: 291-292). When Dushyanta and his wife are reunited, Shakuntala is emaciated, pallid, but the light of chastity and devotion shines in her eyes and touches Dushyanta's heart (Mirashi and Navlekar 1969: 321). There is neither 'simplicity and artlessness', love, nor maturation and learning, in the Shakuntala-Esmond relationship. Shakuntala pursues Esmond, he in turn 'allowed her to stay with him' for the night and even his ardour lacks immediacy. It is merely recalled by the love-sick Shakuntala:

> Shakuntala, Shakuntala, you have come to me like a fragrance of jasmine out of the pages of honeyed Kalidasa.
>
> (EI: 158)

It sounds like one of Esmond's quotes at his Western Women's Organization lectures.

Shakuntala's thoughts, impressions and feelings accentuate the discrepancy between what she sees as romantic alazon and what we the readers, are alerted to. The image she creates of Esmond, an enhanced version of his public self, is that of the charming, witty, urbane Englishman.(6) Shakuntala sees him as her 'Shelley' and 'Ariel', tormented by a wife too stupid to appreciate him. When Esmond loses his shoes outside the Taj Mahal, his stance of the stern, coldly angry Westerner demanding a logical explanation amuses Betty and embarrasses the other ladies. The narrative exposes Shakuntala's romanticism and naivety and Esmond's preposterous and futile show of superiority by setting the

scene through Shakuntala's eyes. The last sentence is strongly ironic in that firstly Shakuntala, who knows so little of Esmond does in fact capture the very essence of Esmond's view of himself as superior yet suffering. Also it is a romantic glamorous version of an actual alienation and loneliness:

> There was, Shakuntala thought, great dignity in this angry solitude of his. The people grouped around him ... all seemed insignificant before him, mere extra players. It was as if he alone were of any significance in the world, he and the hot sun, and behind him, a fitting background to his monumental tragedy, the Taj Mahal.
>
> (EI: 137)

The members of Shakuntala's family and the focus of the novel's humorous society have their poorer, less materialistic eiron counterparts in the Ram Nath-Uma households. Ironic counterpoint on the predicaments of both alazons and eirons is accentuated through the *dharma* concept. The contemporary relevance (or irrelevance) of *dharma* is repeatedly used to reinforce incongruities between word and deed. Serenity and harmony elude those mindful of *dharma* in its many forms, whilst the good material life falls to those whose idea of *dharma* is synonymous with self-interest.

Har Dayal sees his present importance and wealth as vindication of his correct attitude to duty and role during the pre-Independence struggle. In Har Dayal's case *dharma* meant total uninvolvement and the preservation of his family wealth from the financial demands of the cause:

> He liked to think of himself as devoted to the Public Cause; just as before - before '47 - he had liked to think of himself as upholding private values in the face of too great a devotion to the Public Cause.
>
> (EI: 46)

As with her view of Esmond, Shakuntala's exaggerated idea of her father as an expert in the arts, dedicated to the 'life of the spirit' marks her as a deluded alazon who contributes to the strengthening of the

humorous society and its 'follies and crimes'. The ironic view of the mutual admiration between father and daughter is best seen in Har Dayal's rendition of his English translation of a Sanskrit poem at a party. The narrative signals the particular perspective by substituting 'Daddji' for Har Dayal:

> He recited, as always, beautifully, with much expression. And he looked so distinguished .... Shakuntala was very proud of him. She looked round the audience and saw that most of them were looking down at the tips of their own feet; she thought this was a pity because one ought to look at Daddji as well as hear him when he was reciting, he put so much expression into his face and gestures to suit the words.
>
> (EI: 63)

Shakuntala's thoughts accentuate the ironic perspective the readers are acquiring - namely that it is a very amusing episode at which the guests have to look at their shoes because they can hardly refrain from laughing.

Vastly different from Har Dayal's world of cocktail parties and committees, the elegance of his home and wife Madhuri (her name means 'sweetness') and their successful children, is Ram Nath's: of musty books in a closed room, his discontented wife Lakshmi (named after the goddess of wealth), their betel-juice-spattered tenement dwelling in a poor quarter of Delhi and most importantly, Ram Nath's disregard for the trappings of material success. He is the 'nobody' to Har Dayal's social prominence, the solitary eccentric to Har Dayal's affability and sycophantic tactfulness. As such, though Har Dayal considers him his 'brother', Shakuntala's betrothal to Narayan is impossible. As Har Dayal points out:

> She is a girl who cares too much for the refinements of life, the beauties that come with sophistication, to be able to give them up.
>
> (EI: 172)

Ram Nath is the classic eiron, self-deprecating, unobtrusive and unobtrusively drawn yet important, particularly in first phase irony where he serves to highlight the 'anomalies and injustices', of the humorous society. He accepts with a mixture of wisdom, 'clairvoyant knowledge of himself and others' and 'flexible pragmatism', the Setebos-like callousness, selfishness and snobbery of Har Dayal and his family (AC: 226). In his 'avoidance of all illusion and compulsive behaviour' he is aware of his shortcomings - his relegation of householder's duties, his uninvolvement in the business and interactions of everyday life. Yet he is not subject to ironic scrutiny,for this self-knowledge is the wisdom and absence of delusion that make him different from Esmond, Har Dayal, Madhuri and Amrit. Indeed he serves not only as foil but is instrumental in directing sharp irony at Har Dayal's family as when he speaks in ironic self-deprecation but exposes Amrit's arrogance and overweening self-confidence:

> Listen, I will tell you something .... Do you know, I have long suspected this, but I think my son has no ambition - is it not dreadful to have such a son?
> .....
> I have never seen him wear good clothes such as you, Amrit, are wearing, ... worst of all, not only has he no money in the bank, he is not even ashamed of this fact. Have I not reason as a father to grieve for him?
>
> (EI: 72)

Ram Nath's moral integrity, ability for self-analysis and non-attachment to the 'fruits' of action, are reflections of his readiness, by temperament if not by religious faith, for the process of renunciation of worldly *dharmas*. Ironically, the character who treats his sister's piety with gentle amusement and who is a 'nothing' in the humorous society, is the only man who has some semblance of the qualities listed in the *Gita* for the *atmansiddha*, the ideal of the perfected man. He is the man who has sacrificed wealth and acclaim, has overcome the desires of the flesh, is stoically indifferent to pleasure and pain, has no selfish aim or

personal hopes and who makes no demands on others (Organ 1974: 29). That Ram Nath is imperfect, and not at peace with himself are indications that *atmansiddhi* will always be an unrealized ideal. *Atmansiddhi* is 'human perfecting, not human perfection'. In talking of the concept of *atmansiddhi*, Organ notes:

> Man's potentiality exceeds his actuality. He is never all that he can be. His being as man is his eternal being.
>
> (Organ 1974: 31)

As eiron and seen as the perfecting individual Ram Nath's values lie in the fact that despite his inability to join in the mainstream of life, he is the unobtrusive centre of the more enlightened values of Uma and of his son Narayan who, like his father before, has chosen the *dharma* for a 'Public Cause' vastly different from Har Dayal's concept of it.

In Uma, there is yet another seeker of *atmansiddhi*, a more conscious one who attempts to live the righteous life by prayer, observance of ritual, a generosity of spirit and a capacity for love. Obsessed with having Gulab and Ravi away from Esmond, 'Gulab's God', Uma is guilty of breaking one of the basic laws of marriage. She is subject to ironic undercutting as we see her actions motivated by conflicting pulls between tradition and an ex-revolutionary fighter's sense of just causes particularly when it is that of her daughter. It is her food that sustains Gulab and Ravi. The meals that never fail to turn up and the promises of uninterrupted afternoon sleep, of oil baths and massage, of favourite sweets are part of Uma's strategies to get Gulab to leave Esmond. The narrative tone is ironic yet understanding and kindly as we are shown Uma, a deeply devout woman, using religion to excuse her religious misdemeanours:

> The Lord has helped me and instructed me as he did Arjun on the battlefield.
>
> (EI: 28)

Like the warrior in the *Gita*, Uma has had her doubts ('how long ... have I thought and battled' [EI: 29]). Eventually, bolstered by prayer, Uma carries out the equally important *dharma* of protective mother (she is named after the mother goddess, and consort of Siva):

> She had for Gulab's sake, stifled the habit of thought, the inbred instinct, that told her a woman's husband is her God.
>
> (EI: 28-29)

The fact that the narrative voice appears to speak from a reliable point of view, Ram Nath's,leaves us with an impression of a brave and courageous woman.

Uma is the first of Jhabvala's pious women, attempting to live her life according to the 'Ancient Epics': one of sacrifice (EI: 28, 30), of humility (EI: 191) and of religious devotion (EI: 191). There is a generosity of spirit that allows her to love the cold and distant Madhuri and to receive the only instances of genuine love and respect in Esmond in India: from Bachani, Ram Nath, and the unending stream of religious visitors to whom she plays host. Unlike Ram Nath she keeps in touch with the world. 'Free, bold and courageous' she remains 'caught up in the mainstream of life' (EI: 182), rising to meet the abundance of life 'with her characteristic 'fire' and 'spirit':

> Atmansiddhi begins with man turning inward but it finds fulfilment in turning outward to the world and the needs of man.
>
> (Organ 1974: 30)

In the process of human perfecting, Uma empathizes: she respects, tolerates, and loves others (Organ 1974: 30). Uma is the female counterpart to Ram Nath, two legitimate portraits of atmansiddhi in action as perceived from an ironic but discerning Western viewpoint.(7)

The humorous society and the 'other' society made up of members on the periphery of a dominant world of crimes and absurdities centre round the two older women protagonists of Esmond in India, Madhuri and Uma. Descriptive details of setting and character accentuate the deeper divisions of values. Where Madhuri is 'dainty, pretty and precise' (EI: 153) Uma is large, expressive, open and 'rather splendid' with her square shoulders, broad hips her head held erect on a round, full, firm neck' (EI: 27). Madhuri's day runs on appointments and well-timed activities; Uma's 'days were long and rambling and unpremeditated, full of possibilities' (EI: 92-93). Her house is old and uncared for, with peeling plaster, an untended garden, a pond covered with slime and a fountain with no water. Esmond feels he can belong to the refined elegance and taste of Madhuri's house but does not visit nor permit his wife's visits to Uma's home. Uma's religious rituals are paralleled in Madhuri's morning toilette which not even a quarrel with Har Dayal can put off (EI: 122). The ritual of the warm or cold drinks brought by Har Dayal for his wife (EI: 20) the unobtrusive reference to the well-polished figures of the gods Ganesh (for good fortune) and of the dancing Nataraja merely for decorative purposes, highlight not just the different priorities of the humorous society but aspects of modern India in the Westernized lives of the Har Dayal household compared to the more traditional India represented by Uma's world. Uma's insistence on Gulab's return to the peace and security of her home is an insistence on the superiority of the traditional values, and indirectly, a longing for the zest, life and togetherness of the past (EI: 182).

The ambivalent conclusion of Esmond in India fittingly portrays the pessimistic, ironic tone of the novel that suggests that there exists in human affairs and relationships a basic and irremediable absurdity (Muecke 1969: 120). From the divergent thoughts of two alazons, one confidently predicting the course of his future life, the other building dreams on a

non-existent love affair, we have the sense of looking down on characters caught in bondage and delusion. The remembrance of Gulab's beautiful eyes, and the bustle of Indian life in the last paragraph is poignantly ironic because Esmond can be gracious about 'the noise, the heat and smell' and the Indian eyes of a Gulab or Shakuntala because 'he knows that soon there would be only sea and sky and gentle games of tennis' (EI: 206). On the other hand Shakuntala is not ready to live the liberated life of the educated, Westernized Indian woman. Idealistic and naive, Shakuntala at the end, is an abandoned woman no better than Gulab whom she despises for not living up to Esmond's intellect and elegance.

For Gulab, comfort and love remain so long as Uma is with her; Shakuntala's fate remains open-ended. For both women the future is uncertain. For Shukuntala there is the possibility of discovery and rejection by Madhuri; consequent upon this there could be marriage to Narayan. The probability however is that Shakuntala may, after the initial disappointment, quietly slip into her parents' world enjoying the heartbreak of a 'frightfully unhappy love affair' (EI: 187). Or, having been 'discovered', scolded and her moment of weakness in Agra' suitably and efficiently concealed by Madhuri, Shakuntala will eventually take her place, like Amrit's wife, among Delhi's elite. Either way Shakuntala remains a member of the humorous society.

What is also equally clear is that in learning to survive through 'clairvoyant knowledge of themselves and others' and learning to keep [their] eyes open and [their] mouths shut (AC: 226) the eirons are often neglected, derided, alone and ineffectual. Narayan has to travel out to the rural areas to find a worthy cause and Uma has to engage in battle to get her daughter away from Esmond's influence. Even the eirons' survival is marked by irony as we see Ram Nath alienated and often helpless, and Uma guilty of worshipping her daughter. This dark perspective is part of the novel's emphasis on a Westerner's growing disenchantment with India and

the beginnings of Jhabvala's thematic concern with subjects close to her own experience: alienation, rootlessness and exploitation.

Get Ready for Battle (1962)

The plot of Get Ready for Battle revolves on the different but related efforts of three protagonists, Vishnu, Sarla Devi and Kusum Mehra, to realize their aspirations. Vishnu, the son of estranged parents Gulzari Lal, the businessman, and Sarla Devi, idealist and spiritual seeker, strives to rise above conflicting parental expectations and his clinging wife Mala to choose his own career and chart the general course of his future. Sarla Devi renounces family ties and wealth for a life of contemplation and selfless championing of the poor and exploited of Delhi. Her fight to stop the government resettlement programme for the slum dwellers of Bundi Busti is thwarted by the purchase of valuable land adjoining the slum colony by Gulari Lal Properties and bribery of the leader of the slum dwellers to hasten the eviction. The third protagonist, Kusum, Gulzari Lal's mistress for eight years, is engaged in hastening his divorce from Sarla Devi chiefly by proving herself indispensable to his happiness and the running of his household.(8) Kusum also successfully becomes the friend and confidante of Brij Mohan (Sarla Devi's brother), convincing him both of the need to allow Sarla Devi freedom to lead her own life and as Gulzari Lal's new wife, her own continued interest and support for Brij Mohan's material well-being.

Gulzari Lal functions as a kind of fixed centre, triggering the actions of the three protagonists related to him. A number of patterns intersect the three parallel movements. There is Vishnu's friendship with

Gautam, the idealist who wants to set up a school for rural children, and with Sumi his young relative who has a crush on Vishnu. Another is Brij Mohan's relationship with Tara the prostitute. Finally the Bundi Busti matter involves Delhi matron Mrs. Bhatnagar and her friends who want to provide a new way of life for the slum-dwellers once they are resettled.

In Esmond in India, the disparity between the humorous society and that of more self-aware protagonists, one brought about by differences of values, makes any alliance or meaningful relationships between them impossible. Although the tone of disillusionment in Get Ready for Battle is not as dark as that in Esmond in India, the later novel is nevertheless a sombre study of a materialism that frustrates and sometimes defeats heroic and spiritual ideals, one that Hadyn Moore Williams refers to as 'heroic idealism and romantic exultance' (Williams 1969: 89). In highlighting the wide disparity between the rich and the poor and homeless, the novel takes up more fully than any of Jhabvala's previous works, that aspect of Indian life she persistently alludes to. As a result, predominances of material self-seeking, the power of this society to exploit, and the inability of certain individuals to fit in, much less to deflect the society from its selfish causes are features that place Get Ready for Battle within Frye's first-phase irony.

A feature of first-phase irony is the special attention Frye accords the eiron, the person who attempts to keep his 'balance' in a permanent undisplaced world of anomalies and injustices by 'an avoidance of all illusion and compulsive behaviour, a reliance on observation and timing rather than on aggressiveness' (AC: 226). Here more than in Esmond in India and A Backward Place, the 'balance' of the eirons is gravely threatened by the humorous society as much as by an ironic viewpoint that does not exempt Vishnu or Sarla Devi from criticism. Vishnu is torn between conflicting loyalties to a father he respects, and a mother he loves and sympathises with. As he contends with the differing demands of

his wife Mala, of Gautam's,Sumi's and his own ideals, Vishnu is both the hero of the ironic mode seen as inferior in power or intelligence from the reader's point of view, and the eiron of first-phase irony who can, but only with difficulty, work out some means of survival. The 'balance' of Sala Devi, the other eiron, is equally threatened as we see her subject to stronger ironic scrutiny. Although this is sympathetic, we see her sometimes unable to avoid 'compulsive behaviour', given to aggressiveness or lacking in the flexible pragmatism of an eiron, particularly in her dealings with the alazons. Yet her mistaken underestimation of the pursuit of wealth influence and the sensual is a reflection of her own piety and high principles: it serves to show, even more clearly, how the humorous society perpetuates its power: with the trappings of false pretences, the dead-weight of tradition and the visible signs of refinement and graciousness.

The disparity between the rich and poor in India is one that Jhabvala constantly refers to in her non-fictional writing and in the interviews she gives. The world of Gulzari Lal's parties, Mrs. Bhatnagar's tea-meetings, the cocktail parties and nightclubbing of Vishnu's friends and that of the makeshift shelters of the desperate and homeless of Delhi's poor are described in two of these. In 'Open City' (1964), Jhabvala directs bitter criticism at the indifferent Delhi elite and the Western visitor. The latter becomes less sad and outraged at the sight of human suffering as he is treated to a round of invitations by Indians eager to show their wealth and hospitality (Jhabvala 1964: 40-41). In 'Moonlight, Jasmine and Rickets' (1975) Jhabvala writes how Westerners are often horrified at their own increasing tolerance of the suffering of the poor and of the attitude of the Indians themselves:

> While wondering at their own attitude, my Western characters wonder still more at that of the Indian characters. One of these Western characters may be invited to a wedding - a festive scene where fairy lights twinkle, the tables are

> loaded with pilaos and kebabs, and the guests with ornaments and brocades; the bandsmen play.
>
> No one seems to notice that the bandsmen have no shoes, that gazing in at the front there is a rabble of children suffering from rickets and eye disease while at the back, where the waste food goes, a rabble of grown-ups is holding out old tins. Don't Indians *see*? my Western character asks.
>
> (Jhabvala 1975: 35)

In Esmond in India the continuity of the humorous society is implied in the way Amrit and his wife Indira have internalized the love of the good life from Madhuri and in the way Shatuntala identifies herself with her father's artistic pretensions. Thus in Esmond in India the values that perpetuate follies, injustices and crimes are primarily located in Har Dayal's family, representative of the upper class Westernized families of Delhi. In Get Ready for Battle despite the family disarray and disharmony in Gulzari Lal's family; because of the Bundi Busti problem, the humorous society is clearly seen as comprising those who stand to gain by the resettlement programme, in fact the breakup of the family is a sign of the eirons needing to move away from having to live by the alazons' priorities.

Apart from Sarla Devi and Vishnu, the battles that the characters engage in are all self seeking, concerned with obtaining material benefits. Although the pursuit of wealth and happiness is a legitimate human aspiration, in Get Ready for Battle it is engaged in without the ways of righteousness and ethnical discipline (Radhakrishnan 1980: 57). The concept of personal *dharma* becomes one of purely personal gain with no consideration for the larger question of society's harmony and order in the proper carrying out of individual *dharma*. This fact underlies the comic aspects of the novel, the charm and vivacity of Kusum, and the sparkle of the Gulzari Lal-Kusum relationship. Against the high principles of Sarla Devi and Vishnu's search for self-fulfilment are portrayed the various battles of the humorous society which often take on the rationalizations of *dharma*: for Gulzari Lal it is duty towards

family; for Kusum, a sense of tradition and propriety; for Brij Mohan it is a question of family honour and for Mrs. Bhatnagar a matter of civic duty and service for the nation. The effect of all these separate quests is to produce an overall impression of actions that ultimately cause separation rather than unity. Kusum works quietly and successfully to separate her lover legally from Sarla Devi, and Mala from being mistress of the Gulzari Lal household; Gulzari Lal is ultimately responsible for the uprooting of the slum-dwellers from Bundi Busti; and Mala, in her possessiveness, unwittingly aggravates Vishnu's problems. The sense of disunity exists even with the eirons: Vishnu and Sarla Devi face criticism not only from the alazons, between them a rift of doubt and disappointment is apparent. The emphasis on the loneliness and alienation of the eirons is part of the increasingly dark view of life that sees eirons and alazons, a mix of the deluded and hypocritical, the altruistic and idealistic as diminished figures engaged in finding meaning yet contributing to the perpetuating of injustices, anomalies and crimes.

The central aspect of the moral framework that structures the irony in Get Ready for Battle is derived from the *Gita* and introduced at the beginning of the book in its title and epigraph:

> Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss
> Victory and defeat, then get ready for battle.

This injunction by Krishna to Arjuna occurs in the Second Teaching of the *Gita*.(9) The religious ideal is focussed in the text in an episode (which will be discussed later) between Vishnu and Sarla Devi when he reads this particular section of the *Gita* and is himself subjected to his mother's plea that he must rise above the mundane and fulfil his spiritual duties (GRB: 105-106).

Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna occurs when he warns the latter that he will be branded a coward if he refuses to fight and carry out his duty

as a warrior. Elaborating on the need for disinterested action and being forever lucid, Krishna elaborates:

> Be intent on action,
> not, on the fruits of action
> avoid attraction to the fruits
> and attachment to inaction!
>
> Perform action, firm in discipline,
> relinquishing attachment.
> be impartial to failure and success
> this equanimity is called discipline

(BG: 2, V47-48, p. 36)

In engaging in rightful action, Arjuna escapes bondage to the cycle of actions, of death and rebirth, (*karma*). In utilizing this particular exhortation for her epigraph, Jhabvala has chosen one of the *Gita's* most important references to duty. The field of internecine war is equated with the field of sacred duty:

> To do one's dharma, as Krishna says in the Gita, is to do the work that is required solely by reason that it is one's duty so to do. If one acts according to dharma, one ought not to be concerned about the results or the rewards.

(Organ 1974: 200)

Krishna's exhortation in the novel's epigraph becomes a pervasive, powerful aid for viewing and appreciating the ironic portrayal of Jhabvala's protagonists as they get ready for their battles, worldly and spiritual.

The problem of the Bundi Busti slum-dwellers provides a focus for Jhabvala's portrayal of India of the sixties: modern, industrialized but already showing the signs of corruption, exploitation and indifferent planning in urban over-population, widespread poverty and homelessness. The poor of Bundi Busti after fifteen years, are threatened with eviction because the municipality wants the land as part of an 'overall development plan'. It is a fitting focus for the different attitudes it elicits from the novel's characters. To the alazons, it is a piece of valuable land

that will enhance the value of the surrounding area. For Sarla Devi it is the people who are important, she fights to allow them to stay on, close to where they work. For Kusum it is another means to win Gulzari Lal and for the social workers the successful resettlement of the refugees will mean an enhanced social image. The Bundi Busti issue thus emphasizes the novel's concern with disinterested action and action born of desire; of the concept of relinquishment, (*tyaga*) of action performed without concern for the fruit and that of *raga* or action performed for pleasure (Organ 1974: 228).

In highlighting the differing values of the alazon's society and that of the eiron, the Bundi Busti problem places Gulzari Lal in conflict with his wife Sarla Devi; it brings together Kusum Mehra and Sarla Devi in a brief association beneficial to the former and gives Mrs. Bhatnagar and her social workers yet another opportunity to organize the lives of the poor of Delhi. In the midst of this clear differentiation of values, of *tyaga* and *raga*, is Vishnu, caught between professional loyalties to his father and an instinctive rapport with his mother's unworldly concerns.

When we first see Gulzari Lal he is host to a party for a municipal engineer who has some time in the future to pass some rather tricky plans of Gulzari Lal's (GRB: 7). The company is 'superior' and the aim is to 'dazzle'. The ironic narrative operating partly through Gulzari Lal's thoughts points out that the party is 'stimulating' for 'almost everyone in the room would be of use to someone else'. The word 'stimulating' and 'stimulus' are repeated, providing an impression of the businessman's exploitative nature and the gratification of the senses that underlie such gatherings when guests size each other up for future use:

> Almost everyone in the room could be of use to someone else and this was stimulating. There was a Commissioner who was stimulating to a number of fairly high-ranking civil servants, who were in their turn stimulating to a number of middle-ranking civil servants, and so on, down to the municipal engineer for whom the party was made by the presence of the Vice-Chairman of the Board. An overall stimulus was provided

> by a Maharajah, an imposing figure who, now that his kingdom and a good deal of his income were gone ... was really of no importance to anyone, but his presence made everyone feel they had got into good company and had come a long way from where they had started.
>
> (GRB: 7)

Although he is not the new rich of India, being descendant of a well-established landowning family of the warrior caste, Gulzari Lal is like Lalaji in Nature of Passion in that they are both driven by the acquisition of material wealth. Like Lalaji too, warm attachment to others, in this case for Kusum his mistress, balances somewhat his materialism and unscrupulousness. The ironically ambiguous resolution of Get Ready for Battle however does not centre round Gulzari Lal as happens in Nature of Passion with Lalaji. Gulzari Lal is not shown to be morally superior over his family. Interested in more than the ease and affluence that Gulzari Lal's 'golden road' can offer, both Vishnu and Sarla Devi leave those things he considers important (GRB: 16, 37, 141).

The successful eviction of the Bundi Busti refugees means increased value in the adjoining land bought over by Gulzari Lal Properties. When Sarla Devi insists that he give up the land so that the development programme and the threat of eviction are removed she is asking him to ignore all the financial gains from 'a first-class investment', 'a good proposition'. Submission to Sarla Devi's request is impossible because his conception of his *svadharma*, the special functions and duties assigned to him (Radhakrishnan 1980: 79) are derived from his landowning background, his inherited wealth, the access to property development. Even when he visits Sarla Devi to discuss their divorce we see him occupied in 'pleasant reflections' of developing the 'good piece of ground' on which Brij Mohan and his sister live (GRB: 36).

Gulzari Lal sees himself as 'the provider, the prop behind his son, his daughter-in-law and his grandchild; and all that they had to do was to be happy and comfortable in the luxurious setting which he had devised for

them' (GRB: 111). This is a view of life that is similar to an earlier response to Gautam when the latter tells him that business has a corrupting influence on Vishnu:

> Gulzari Lal pretended to be listening .... He could afford to be tolerant: he had lived longer in the world than Gautam, and had learnt that, in spite of fine words, the end, the goal of life, towards which all men strove, was to be rich and comfortable.
>
> (GRB: 26)

In the same manner, Sarla Devi's worries about Vishnu are confidently countered with the logic of material success:

> There is no need to worry over Vishnu. He is doing very well in the office, he has a good wife, a beautiful child, he lives at home with me - there is nothing he can wish for.
>
> (GRB: 37)

When he finally learns that Vishnu wants to branch out on his own, his musings reveal a dissatisfaction that has more to do with a personal regret that he is not as lucky as other businessmen who have more business-minded sons. It reveals his inability to see beyond his materialistic standards for happiness - that which ultimately drives his son and wife away. The narrative highlights his sense of loss and defeat at Vishnu's going, all the marks of the deluded man who cannot relinquish attachment to the fruits of action. Yet in clauses like 'he told himself' 'tried to persuade himself' we see the alazon who is aware of, but stubbornly refuses to accept the fact that other priorities do exist:

> He had worked, he was working, he told himself, only for Vishnu, and everything that Gulzari Lal had built up was there for Vishnu to take and enjoy. He felt some pity, for himself when he compared himself to ... the well-off businessmen ... who had built up firms and not inconsiderable fortunes like himself and now had the pleasure of seeing their families reaping the fruits. And like the sons of those men, Vishnu too had everything he could wish for - a beautiful wife and child, a car, a household of servants, a bank account of his own, a place in the office. What else was there in a mans

> life, Gulzari Lal tried to persuade himself, what further need was there of ambition?
>
> (GRB: 141)

The poor people of Bundi Busti and the collection of social workers headed by Mrs. Bhatnagar are two sets of people caught up together with the Gulzari Lal-Sarla Devi conflict. They represent the two meanings of society for the estranged husband and wife. There is Mrs. Bhatnagar's group, 'people like [Gulzari Lal] who have houses and cars and go to clubs' and there are those who are part of 'the millions who have nothing and live in hovels on a handful of rice' (GRB: 39).

In the world of first-phase irony, 'society will, if given any chance, behave more or less like Caliban's Setebos in Brownings poem ' (AC: 226). Instances of this and of the action of those people the god Krishna describes as 'Driven by desire ... to win powers and delights' (BG: 2, V43, p. 35) are seen in the way Gulzari Lal prepares the groundwork for the eviction of the refugees. Sarla Devi sees the fight as between those who 'had nothing and were nobody' and those who, like her husband, 'understood how things were to be accomplished, quietly approached the right persons, set the wheels in motion, and their work was done' (GRB: 121). It is an apt comment on Gulzari Lal's methods, ironic in that even as she thinks of it, the 'correct wheels' have already been put in motion because earlier we are told that he had 'in the last few weeks shown favour to several sanitary inspectors and municipal clerks, all of whom had assured him that Bundi Busti was no problem' (GRB: 99).

A kind of chain reaction of callous, cruel exploitation and Setebos-like behaviour sets in: Rattan Singh, the broker, acts on behalf of the profiteering society as he sees bribery as the easiest way to hasten the eviction; Ramchander the Bundi Busti spokesman betrays the slum-dwellers and turns to the duties of provider as excuse: 'I am a poor man, I have a wife and children and a very old mother to support' (GRB: 149). Mrs. Bhatnagar and her team of family planning experts and health officials are

the enlightened reformers of the new progressive India yet they are no better than the sanitary inspectors and clerks who are 'dazzled' by Lalaji because their callous planning of the poor people's lives is motivated more by ulterior motives of honour and social prestige than genuine concern to eradicate the roots of their poverty.

The relationship of Kusum to Gulzari Lal and the instant friendship she engineers with Sarla Devi provide some of the best instances of the ironies between the life of displined action and relinquishment,(10) and that devoted to *raga* or passion for pleasure. The comfortable companionship and sedate love-making between Gulzari Lal and Kusum, her careful grooming and social manners, provide some of the novel's best scenes of comedy when she plays the coquette, and of harmony when they enjoy each other's company. It is however important to remember that the final scene between Gulzari Lal and Kusum when 'never had there been such accord between them' is the result of a great deal of tactical skill, manoeuvreing and placating of not only Gulzari Lal, but Mala, Brij Mohan and Sarla Devi on Kusum's part. Sarla Devi appears graceless and awkward compared to Kusum because the latter's aim is to give pleasure to Gulzari Lal, to make herself indispensable for his creature comforts and thereby gain the legitimate status of marriage. During the final scene Kusum is assured of Gulzari Lal's divorce of Sarla Devi and her complete control of the household with him convinced of the need for Mala to be in Chandnipat with Vishnu. (If you were to go into God knows what forsaken places, do you think I would stop to ask myself, is it practical to go with him or not? [GRB: 154]). The narrative describes Kusum's joy, that of someone who has finally achieved her dreams after a long fight. It emphasizes her raga and the selfish motives underlying so many of her actions:

> Her eyes as she lay there, roved the familiar room .... And in her thoughts - as she had done over so many years - she furnished it anew with ruffled curtains ... a lilac silk bedspread and little white and gold chairs matching a dressing table that reflected an array of little bottles in its heart-

> shaped mirror. It was an enticing prospect and one that was now, she thought - with a little access of joy which made her kiss his well-shaved cheek in great affection - closer than it had ever been.
>
> (GRB: 155)

In the last line, love of the good life and love of Gulzari Lal happily merge.

Kusum's twinship theory, that in a previous life she and Sarla Devi were born as sisters, is an ironic version of the play of opposites that is important in the novel. It is the kind of quick facility with words and sentiments that Sarla Devi is totally incapable of uttering. The narrative qualifications - 'She had only just stumbled on this theory, and it moved her' (GRB: 130) - is a wry ironic undercutting common with the narrative treatment of Kusum, highlighting her ability to use every situation to her benefit. In an earlier episode with Mala she speaks piously of tolerance, and charitably of Sarla Devi being 'different from other people'. The text concludes with a wry acknowledgement of Kusum's concern with appearance: 'She looked tolerant and good' (GRB: 79).

The textual strategies involved in the ironic presentation of Sarla Devi and of the irreconcilable differences between the world of ideals Sarla Devi represents and that of the alazon's *raga* may be seen in the episode when Sarla Devi visits Mrs. Bhatnagar's house and meets Kusum there. The visit is as much an act of penance as it is to get Mrs. Bhatragar's help in preventing the eviction of the slum-dwellers. It is an episode that clearly shows Sarla Devi's altruism as lacking in tactical skills, defeated by the complacency of the other ladies and finally, fooled by Kusum. The conversation consists of the ladies talking at cross-purposes with Sarla Devi aggressively demanding help, Mrs. Bhatnagar expertly deflecting comment by busying herself with tea and cakes and Kusum with platitudes useful for any occasion until she learns Gulzari Lal is directly involved after which her strategies change key to win over her rival's good opinion:

> 'If we don't stand by these people, who will? Who will even care what happens to them?'
> 'We have studied the problem from every angle,' said Mrs. Bhatnagar. 'There are many circumstances to be considered.' Sarla Devi found herself looking for help at Kusum. And Kusum did not fail her. The fact that she was not quite sure what cause it was she was espousing in no way detracted from her enthusiasm for it. She put down her teacup and sat up in her chair: 'Where the innocent are to be saved from oppression, of course one must not wait, one must act at once!'
>
> (GRB: 128)

It is a comic episode with Kusum, Krishna-like at the end, exhorting the ladies towards righteous engagement, to 'act at once'. Yet the ironic undertow is felt, in the way Kusum, in placating Mrs. Bhatnagar concurs with her that Sarla Devi is 'strange' and 'impatient' and in the way Sarla Devi leaves defeated in her efforts, assured by the 'adaptable' Kusum of her friendship and support for the Bundi Busti cause.

In first phase irony, the eirons, through pragmatic flexibility, and an avoidance of illusion and obsessive action develop strategies for survival in the humorous society. The irony with which Sarla Devi is viewed - her lack of flexibility, her inability like the traditional eiron to be unobtrusive, to rely on observation and timing - makes Get Ready for Battle a particularly sombre irony of the first phase. Sarla Devi's lack of interest in the goings-on of the worldly life makes her a particularly vulnerable eiron to the callous exploitation of the humorous society. As the upright eiron and genuine spiritual seeker who severs family and social relations to lead the ascetic life, Sarla Devi is ironically drawn to the worldly problems of the poor, dispossessed and the outcasts of society. As a woman learning discipline and relinquishment, and as a champion of the poor, she is doubly isolated by the unredeemed society. In living a life of disciplined action and surrendering notions of 'I' and 'mine' Sarla Devi becomes an oddity. The view of Sarla Devi as being constantly engaged in a world which cares little for her kind, or her causes, is part of the darker ironic perspective of the erosion of spiritual values in

India. On a larger context though, it also shows 'a law of irony by which our altruistic aspirations are opposed to a fundamental egotism' life as being fundamentally opposed to morality in the way it is socially organized (Muecke 1969: 144). The doggedness with which Sarla Devi moves on to her next cause shows her as yet another of Jhabvala's characters in the process of human perfecting. However in her complete isolation from all the other protagonists her story gives a foretaste of the irony in the later group of novels when altruistic aspirations and spiritual quests are doomed by self-ignorance.

The dignity Sarla Devi brings to her quest for herself and others is derived from what the author refers to as:

> That Indian spirituality - not grabbing at the world, but wanting nothing whatsoever to do with it.
>
> (Jhabvala 1975: 35)

The traditional framework illuminates the paradox of Sarla Devi's position which affords some of the best examples of situational irony in the novel. As a devout Hindu Sarla Devi is doing the right thing by turning away from the materialism she sees. Her austere way of life, developed from early exposure to Gandhian principles, is an attempt to withdraw from the world (*vairagya*), eventually to achieve oneness by reuniting with God 'free from her own body and from the sense of others' (GRB: 122). In a way Sarla Devi seeks to fulfil the third asrama in the life of the individual as *vanaprastha* the hermit or forest dweller. Paradoxically her heightened spiritual awareness tugs her back into the world, her compassion alerting her to others' 'suffering in a world where nothing could be accepted and everything had to be fought against' (GRB: 122), Sarla Devi desires withdrawal but is most intensely alive to the needs of others.

Her engagement with the poor is however treated with impatience and derision by the alazons. Just as the follies and crimes can exist in the humorous society in the way a rich man's mistress is tolerated over a

common prostitute like Tara, so too tradition dictates that Sarla Devi is 'mad' and 'strange'. Despite her selfless championing of the poor, one more sincere than that of Mrs. Bhatnagar's, she is a failed wife and mother who has forsaken the duties of a householder. Mala who throws temper tantrums and demands constant attention from Vishnu says that her mother-in-law 'has never cared for anyone, only herself' (GRB: 12). From this ironic situation there develops yet another contradiction in that despite her tactical inadequacies and the censure she incurs from others, Sarla Devi is the only character most able to treat alike 'pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat'. Like 'an enlisted soldier', she 'could not opt out' and engages in battle. In being thus, she is the sincere seeker after self-perfecting for it is an ideal that 'begins with man turning inward but ... finds fulfilment in turning outward to the world and the needs of man' (Organ 1974: 30). Towards the end of the novel undefeated by the failure to help the refugees, Sarla Devi walks towards the red light district of Delhi to look for Tara and start on yet another exercise in disciplined action by championing the rights of the prostitutes. Once again Sarla Devi though longing 'to be free from her own body and from the sense of that of others', is 'tugged back by her compassion into a world where nothing could be accepted and everything had to be fought against' (GRB: 122). It is an act that speaks for the eiron's ability to 'assert his humanity ... by accepting the dissolution of heroism, by maintaining, not without dignity, the dialectic between how things are and how they could be' (Hassan 1961: 178).

In venturing out, first to meet with the swamis and the politicians, then to live on her own atop Brij Mohan's crumbling house, Sarla Devi has broken tradition governing the social and religious practices for Hindu women even in a modern India. A woman accrues divine favour for herself and her husband by carrying out her duties faithfully as wife and mother. Sarla Devi is a woman alone, her nature, her unharnessed energy without

benefit of a man's control (Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 115-117). Rejected for not showing the accepted proof of caring mother and loving wife, her moral strength and capacity for love make her a kind of victim figure of ironic fiction (AC: 41-42), criticized and rejected by the humorous society. She is a kind of scapegoat figure of the over-liberated, too-clever modern Indian woman who does not conform to the alazons' norms. Yet we are shown in a narrative that highlights harmony and beauty, two instances of Sarla Devi achieving 'a disembodied state of acceptance', a state of earthly withdrawal or *samadhi* (GRB: 122; 149). These occur when she is alone and add to her heroic stature with even the suggestion of divinity the scapegoat can attain (AC: 42). It is a mark of the humorous society that true piety is not easily recognized. The only time Sarla Devi is accorded praise by her husband is when he admits to Kusum that she is 'better than natural', meaning that she has risen above being petty and small-minded, 'nobler' than Kusum, only to emphasize that she is 'different', not of their world, for 'the things that matter to us in life she doesn't care for at all' (GRB: 132). While it acknowledges Sarla Devi's special qualities, the scene is ironically a poignant glimpse into the happier, profane world of Gulzari Lal and Kusum.

Vishnu's worldliness and moral uprightness are consistently emphasized, each qualifying the other. He is the son who has been brought up on his father's 'golden road' yet harbours a restlessness an 'unspent strength' and an idealism that mark him as Sarla Devi's son. In slowly sorting out his plans with Joginder Nath and politely but firmly refusing to give in to his father's wishes to head the Bombay branch, Vishnu conforms more readily to the prudent, self-deprecating eiron of first phase irony. By comparison, Sarla Devi although self-aware eiron is less accommodating and adaptable and therefore more obviously at variance with the society of the alazons. More 'accepted' in this society than Sarla

Devi, Vishnu acts as foil against the unchanging delusions and affectation of the alazons.

Vishnu's escape to Chandnipat has overtones of the action of the quixotic eiron of second phase comedy who runs away to a more congenial society without transforming his own (AC: 229). Yet Vishnu's search for his future ironically parallels the quest theme of romance, highlighting the constraints on the ironic hero as compared to the typical hero of romance 'superior in degree to other men and to his environment' (AC: 33). There is thus a double view of Vishnu: an ironic protagonist hemmed in by the demands and follies of a world he cannot change and as comedy's hero who can take the first steps away from the humorous society. This view is maintained throughout the novel.

The characterization of Vishnu is heavy with allusions and oblique ironic parallels to his divine namesake the god Vishnu and more consistently with Krishna, who is an incarnation of Vishnu, the most popular of the *avataras* (descents or incarnations) of Vishnu. The framework serves to emphasize not just Vishnu's flawed status in respect of the divine, heroic stature of the gods he is associated with, but the delusions of the alazons as they make demands on him.

The god Vishnu is one of three aspects of the supreme Hindu God, whose functions are personified as the Creator (Brahma), Preserver (Vishnu) and Destroyer (Shiva). Vishnu's relatives (and friends) do expect him to preserve their aspirations and in different ways he does keep intact their ambitions. Gulzari Lal expects Vishnu to continue in maintaining the business empire he has created: in deciding to manufacture fountain pens in Chandnipat, Vishnu joins his father's business world. In cutting himself free from his father's world, Vishnu is in fact being more than a 'little merchant's son' and doing what his mother wants him to do, to 'stand and fight'. If the manufacture of fountain pens suggests a mock-epic world for Sarla Devi's 'Arjuna' to

engage in, it is part of the novel's overall ironic-comic view of Vishnu. Mala gets her wish to be always with her husband and Brij Mohan will continue to re-live the excitement and pleasures of his own youth in what he imagines will be further amorous adventures of his nephew.

Brij Mohan refers to Vishnu as 'the Don Juan of Delhi' enquiring at the same time about 'the milkmaids' (GRB: 103). These allusions to Krishna, the amorous god with whom the *gopis* or milkmaids fell in love and unashamedly declared their love and devotion, form part of other ironic parallels between Vishnu and the god Krishna set up to highlight the novel's main male protagonist, his heroic qualities, his battle to rise above the conflicting, irrational demands of the humorous society. Like the god Krishna, Vishnu is surrounded by women who make demands on him. Unlike Krishna who has divine powers to satisfy all his worshippers, Vishnu has great difficulty keeping the women in his life happy.(11) There is Mala, passionately in love with her 'god' and jealous of his absences and friendship with other women; there is Sarla Devi's spiritual love that she wants Vishnu to share. Kusum is warm and affectionate to him as befitting the future wife of Gulzari Lal. Then there is Sumi's tender infatuation and worship of Vishnu and even the attentions of Tara, the prostitute are forced on him by his uncle. Comedy arises from the various love relationships and the demands placed on Vishnu. However with the more serious of this, Vishnu's relationship with his mother, there is a sense of sadness and betrayal felt by both sides that tones down the comedy of a young man who has too many women loving him.

The irony underlying the relationship between mother and son, between two eirons who should recognize each other's strength, is seen in the episode briefly mentioned earlier when Sarla Devi calls on her son to rise above worldly affairs. The episode reverses the parallel encounter between Krishna and Arjuna before the great battle of Kurushektra. Here it is Sarla Devi who takes over Krishna's role, exhorting Visnhu/Arjuna to

'stand up, son, and fight, you must fling yourself into the world!' (GRB: 106). Mother and son are in fact operating at cross-purposes: Sarla Devi is asking her son to work with her and fight the difficult battle over Bundi Busti against Gulzari Lal and the people and institutions his affluence can command. Vishnu on the other hand is reading the *Gita* and applying Krishna's exhortation to his own situation, his sense of his own *dharma* and self-fulfilment. He wants to engage in the fountain-pen business with Joginder Singh but is hemmed in on all sides by the demands of married life, family obligations and worldly relationships. Two forms of legitimate religious actions are involved, yet both eirons are so overcome with passion and the lack of 'lucidity' that they part embittered. Vishnu is resentful of his mother's lack of understanding and love and Sarla Devi fails to realize that her son is not only 'as beautiful as Krishna and strong as Arjuna' but shows conduct over and above that of a mere 'merchant's son'. In forcing Vishnu towards a spirituality he is unprepared for, Sarla Devi is guilty of imposing on her son a degree of renunciation his age and station in life do not as yet require. The conflicting pulls of worldly duties Vishnu has to undertake and that of his mother's altruistic action underlie the episode and is comically emphasized by Brij Mohan shouting to Sarla Devi to release Vishnu so that he can 'come down and have a good time!' (GRB: 106). It offers comic relief for an episode that highlights the gulf that can divide the spiritual seekers from the equally important and fulfilling battles of mundane life.

As husband and as only son of a Kshyastriya businessman, the goals of time, of *kama* (love and pleasures) and *artha* (worldly possessions) are predominant for Vishnu. Yet these goals must operate within the goal of *dharma* or duty. The comic-ironic elements that arise from Vishnu's battles with *kama* and how he manages to hold on to the middle path between

worldly goals and *dharma* is presented by ironic allusion to Vishnu and Mala as the heavenly lovers Krishna and Radha, and Shiva and Parvati.

Reference to Shiva and Parvati (in the picture Vishnu sees in Sumi's house [GRB: 109]) and of the Mother Goddess, the deity Sarla Devi prays to (GRB: 18) and Kusum calls on for aid (GRB: 23), signal the ironic parallel of Vishnu and Mala to the heavenly couples and of Mala's embodiment of aspects of the female deities. In Hinduism, the Mother Goddess, Great Mother, or Holy Mother are names for the deity who possesses the maternal nature of the goddess Shakti (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 336). Just as Shakti embodies dual characteristics, contemplative and active, nurturing and destructive, Mala too shows duality. With her long hair, shapely neck, large 'jewelled eyes', small waist, large hips and 'splendid' back, Mala epitomises the Mother Goddess:

> [Her] slender waist, bending beneath the burden of the ripe fruit of her breasts, swells into jewelled hips, heavy with the promise of infinite maternities.
>
> (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 336)

Significantly, with the harmonious plans to stay in Chandnipat, Mala and Vishnu plan for another child. When we see Mala for the first time in the novel serving Vishnu with wifely devotion, when she is 'calm and silent' and uncomplaining, she takes on the qualities of the submissive Parvati, the personification of Shakti as the tender, devoted wife symbolizing sexual desire and joy, particularly that provided by marriage (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 38-42). Thus it is that Vishnu is aroused by her:

> He looked at her large hips springing out from a small waist and her swaying buttocks with the sari clinging to them in silken, sculptured folds.
>
> (GRB: 134)

However in her other aspect Mala exhibits the aggressive features of Shakti when they quarrel about his going alone to Chandnipat. She is

violent and scratches Vishnu's back. This is a comic inversion of the love-sport indulged in by the gods and their consort: Radha and Parvati exhibit scratch marks when they sport sexually with Krishna and Shiva[12] (Chaudhri 1979: 226; 276). Mala's possessive love and sense of drama render her *deva-guru* helpless and ridiculous: 'naked except for his towel and with his shoulder bleeding' (GRB: 157). The narrative comically highlights Vishnu's helplessness in Mala's Shakti-like combination of wrath and maternal love:

> Mala - tall, dishevelled, her eyes brilliant with tears and anger, and holding a weeping child in her arms - presented an appeal which no one could resist, not even Vishnu.
>
> (GRB: 157)

Comedy is derived from the fact that with Mala the narrative plays with allusions to ideals of female behaviour and female deities to create a character who is both a traditional, sheltered upper-class Indian woman and one aware of the rights of the modern Indian wife and intensely jealous of Vishnu's many liberated women friends. Thus we have in Mala's shrill insistence to be with her husband - 'I shall come with you!', 'I am coming!', and 'I shall never let you go without me!' (GRB: 156-157) - an amusing combination of the faithful Sita and the modern jealous wife. Again in threatening to throw herself (and Pritti) under Vishnu's car, Mala is a comic modern version of the faithful Sati who undergoes death by burning rather than live on without her husband. Whilst ancient texts and oral tradition emphasize the wife's regard for and duties to her husband (Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 123) Mala is very much concerned with Vishnu's neglect of her and his lack of consideration for her feelings.[13]

The eirons of the comic ironies require all their alertness and resources to survive in the humorous society. In Get Ready for Battle the loneliness and isolation they undergo is intensified in the fact that between the two eirons, mother and son, there is a sense of betrayal and

failure that cannot be put right. In the final scene between Sarla Devi and Vishnu before he leaves for Chandnipat, Vishnu who comes for 'her love and approval ... was disappointed that she was showing him neither' (GRB: 158). In pursuing their own *sadhanas* both have to go their separate ways:

> The individual ... may follow the way he chooses - but having chosen, he must faithfully fulfil the responsibilities associated with that path.
>
> (Organ 1974: 36)

The ending of Get Ready for Battle develops the usual ambivalence characteristic of Jhabvala's novels to a larger view of the ambivalences and contradictions that mark human life. Like Esmond in India the novel ends with the possibility of discord and unhappiness balanced against glimmerings of concord and hope. The most positive note lies in the possibilities of Vishnu's future. He is not just the ironic hero and unconscious *atmansiddhi* figure venturing out in rightful engagement but also the new Indian, like Joginder Singh the business man and his future partner, opening up new areas and involved in 'something vigorous and modern and industrial' (GRB: 47). Vishnu looks forward to 'the powerful days ahead' (GRB: 143). There is every possibility that he will be 'a captain of industry and make even more money than [his] father' (GRB: 153) yet there is the sense that as Sarla Devi's son he will not allow himself to be tied down by ordinary worldly things (GRB: 66). The work in Chandnipat will be the liberating of dormant powers, the fulfilling of potentialities, his *sadhana*. Though not outwardly religious, Vishnu's actions, in a society of eroded religious values, set the basis for a later realization of Hindu moral norms.

Yet all this is carefully balanced in the way the narrative hints at potential difficulties, discord and unhappiness. There is no guarantee that the colony of Chandnipat will thrive, or Krishna's fountain-pen factory prosper. Mala's possessive love may be a constant threat to

Vishnu's need to 'roam' and 'soar', to establish his own goals. Sarla Devi comes close to living out the concept of atmansiddhi; she is a warrior 'treating alike pleasure and pain, victory and defeat' yet she is cut off from all family ties, vainly striving to fight the crimes of the humorous, materialistic society. Gautam, the poor idealist, decides to leave,tired of 'you plodding people down here in the plains' (GRB: 152). Even Sumi, unspoilt and innocent readily accepts an arranged marriage and a life of unending household cares. Even though the alazons appear diminished figures, caught in the ironic mode of 'bondage, frustration, or absurdity' it is the eirons and those who are self-aware, moral and idealistic who are most subject to the novels final ambivalences.

A Backward Place (1965)

The story revolves round the fortunes of Westerners in Delhi, particularly Judy and Etta. Judy, a middle-class English girl is married to a small-time actor Bal who for the ten years of their life together has been chasing dreams of succeeding in the film world. The story looks at Judy's initial opposition to Bal's plans to start a new job and life in Bombay and her reluctance to give up the security of her job at the Cultural Dais. Supported however by Bal's auntie Bhuaji and her trust in God, Bal's own enthusiasm and her love for him, Judy accepts the need for change, surrenders her savings to Bal and the novel ends with Judy, Bal, their children Gita and Prithvi and Bhuaji ready to leave for Bombay for Bal's as-yet uncertain job with the actor Kishan Kumar's production unit.

The other important Western character is Etta, an ageing Hungarian beauty. After twenty five years in India, three marriages to Indians and

increasing loneliness and fears for her future, Etta detests life in India. She survives by being mistress to rich Indian protectors who, as the years go by, are older and 'less ardent'. Her latest patron is the hotelier Mr. Gupta, who, despite Etta's pleas to take her with him to Cannes for a conference, eventually abandons her and takes instead a young Indian girl. Etta's story concludes, after a suicide attempt, with her graciously attentive to yet another admirer, the Anglophile Mr. Jumperwala.

Other Western characters include Clarissa, the eccentric spinster from England who professes to have left the superficiality of her upper-class life to seek spirituality in India. Although older 'and lonelier and more ridiculous, and soul and God perhaps no nearer' (BP: 94), Clarissa valiantly maintains her love for India and the life of the '*sadhu*', although her main concerns are a place to stay and making friends with the rich and influential of Delhi. There is also Dr. Franz Hochstadt with his wife Frieda, Germans settled in England on a two-year visiting lectureship in India. The Hochstadts have no problems with life in India because their attitude, a mixture of tolerance, patronizing good humour, and awe over Indian cultural achievements, is coloured by their intellectual pride and the fact that they are merely short-term visitors to India. Unwilling and unable to go deeper than the stock pronouncements and generalization they have culled about India, the Hochstadts, though comic characters, represent temporary visitors to India who are far removed from the very real problems and rewards of life in India.

These problems are clearly perceived by the idealistic Sudhir Bannerjee, Judy's colleague, and Secretary at the Cultural Dais, a pretentious organization presided over by Mrs. Kaul, dedicated to East-West exchange in the arts. Most important of all the Indian characters, and central to the novel's philosophical frame of reference is the widowed aunt, Bhuaji, whose Hindupiety and love bring harmony to the extended

household of Judy and Bal and his elder brother Mukand and his wife Shanti.

In Esmond in India, a Westerner's disgust with his Indian wife and with India are examined, A Backward Place is an extended, more detailed look at the feelings and attitudes of protagonists in relation to India. It examines the differing degrees of attachment, merging and conflict, particularly of the Westerners, towards the 'backward place' that has become home. Through an examination of cultural confrontation, and the aspirations and ambitions of the protagonists, the novel emphasizes the struggles as basically that of survival. In the portrayal of conflict or accord between characters and between characters and the country itself, India emerges as the novel's main protagonist. It is at one and the same time 'this fabled land'; 'a primitive society' different and 'inefficient'; a world of great beauty where the sky speaks and nudges the receptive towards spiritual awareness, and the constant subject of thoughts and conversations. Its 'variety and unexpectedness' expose pretensions and highlight honesty, demoralizing the deluded and offering hope and confidence to true 'lovers'. The title of the novel in its unflattering image of India, is ironic. It is a backward place to the Westerners like Etta who think it is not Westernized or progressive enough, and for those Indians who keep it backward both economically and spiritually because of their materialism, laziness and debased values.

The survival of these handful of people Jhabvala brings together to characterize a cross-section of Delhi life is therefore closely connected with the question of India. For most of them this involves an acceptance of the values, influence and rule of the humorous society. A Backward Place presents a world of low-norm satire of the first-phase in which lesser alazons bow to the dictates of rich, capricious more powerful alazons. In the collective self-deception and self-motivated ingenuity to survive in the backward place 'injustices, follies and crimes' flourish.

It is against these follies, worldliness and self-interest that the eirons' courage and Bhuaji's life of piety, heroic acceptance and detachment are shown.

The emphasis on the fortunes of the two women and on other foreigners brought together in A Backward Place is seen by Gooneratne as indicating a fundamental change of direction in Jhabvala's writing:

> Indian characters are now replaced at the centre of Jhabvala's fictional stage by Westerners caught up in the disillusionment with India that is part of her own experience.
>
> (Gooneratne 1983: 181)

In Judy, Etta and Clarissa we see early examples of the female quester, attracted either to India's spirituality, vulnerable to the sexual attraction of Indian males or subject to both. These characters will feature in all of Jhabvala's novels after A Backward Place, taking central roles in all but In Search of Love and Beauty. Marriage to a handsome, cultured, charming Indian boy brings Etta to India; her subsequent husbands are not rich but handsome, educated young men (BP: 33). Bal's handsomeness evokes anger and frustration in Etta (BP: 137). Judy's marriage to Bal takes her away from the dull, closed middle-class life she has grown up in. Judy's love for Bal is not just duty but desire for her handsome, unpredictable Indian husband. Clarissa came to India after being inspired by Romaine Rolland's account of the life of the spiritual leader Vivekenanda. In love with India's mountains, Nature and peasants, Clarissa anticipates the lonely victim-protagonists of Jhabvala's later novels and the younger hippy drifters that form part of the setting of contemporary India of Heat and Dust and of Three Continents.

Judy and Etta's feelings towards India embody the conflicting inner responses of the novelist herself. As emphatically as she states that 'India sucks the marrow from your bones' (May 1975: 57), Jhabvala acknowledges her love for Indian devotional songs and the admirable

spirituality of Indians (AEI: 18).[14] Unlike Jhabvala's earlier, more straightforward treatment of Western responses to India - Hans Loewe's rapture in The Householder, Esmond's loathing - the dialectic of love and loyalty and of submission and resistance to its power is treated in a more subtle, ambivalent form in A Backward Place. Etta's affectations and struggles to maintain her youth and her Europeanness and keep from 'drowning' in India are sometimes comic yet always pitiful. Judy's submission is not just unthinking 'phlegmatic' acceptance but a merging with the Indian way of life that lends dignity and courage to a simple English girl. In her article 'Moonlight, Jasmine and Rickets' Jhabvala allows that amidst the disease and poverty in India there are 'intimations' of a heaven in the 'nights laden with moonlight and jasmine' (Jhabvala 1975: 35). In A Backward Place, the 'nagging smell outside Etta's flat that Clarissa smells as she stands at the balcony 'seemed a mixture of sewage and jasmine' (BP: 39). This image neatly captures the contradictions that characterize India: its spirituality and its materialism, its debilitating effect on the Westerner and on the other hand its ability to refine or at least educate the outsider towards self-understanding. These conflicting facets provide the subject as well as the setting for the contradictions and qualifications that underlie the actions of characters and heroes of irony and remind us that there is more to the novel's title than meets the eye.

Just as The Householder marks a movement away from the predominant themes of young love and parental opposition, so A Backward Place marks the beginning of a 'drawing back' from the Indian domestic scene and mainly Indian protagonists. There is a certain similarity between these two novels as if in charting specific shifts of emphasis, Jhabvala could not help but make more pronounced than ever the 'subtle, ambiguous' nature of her feelings about India. She displays a certain affection for many of her characters and an affirmation of the positive influences of India

mainly through her protagonists' honesty and capacity for love. But the 'drawing back' is part of the writer's need to assert her Europeanness and the novels also highlight the materialism and selfishness that characterize life in modern India. There is thus a strain of melancholy in these novels brought about by the opposition of a deeply-felt affection and a necessary resistance on the author's part towards India. The wry and tolerant satiric exposures of the delusions and vanities of the protagonists is so consistent that they accentuate rather than detract from the dark, melancholic view of a place and people caught in separate, exploitative fights for survival.

A Backward Place continues with the portrayal of the main concerns of the two earlier novels - the worldliness and materialism of the humorous society seen in the selfish preoccupation of the alazons, and the need for vigilance and flexibility on the eirons' part to survive in the society. The world portrayed is one in which the aspirations, indeed the survival of the characters are dependent on the whims of the rich and influential. This dependence fosters a permanent existence of injustices and anomalies because the alazons, deceiving and self-deceived, will always exploit or be exploited on matters of material wealth and worldly gains.

Like Uma in Esmond in India and Sarla Devi in Get Ready for Battle, the role of Bhuaji is to provide a kind of yardstick not just against the materialistic concerns of the humorous society, but also the special qualities of other self-aware eirons. Thus although Judy and Sudhir are not overtly religious, they are unselfish and courageous and receptive to the spiritual/mystical influences of India. As such they are aligned to Bhuaji's world of acceptance and faith in the future.

The concept of *bhakti* connotes the individual's loving devotion to God as also God's unending love of humanity (Feuerstein 1981: 43). The bhakti or religious devotion and faith of a poor widow living on the love

and charity of her two nephews and their wives becomes the ironic foil to accentuate other more materially-motivated expressions of devotion to the 'gods' of the humorous society - patrons, protectors, and movie heroes. Bal's worship of Kishan Kumar, the sacrifices Etta makes to win Gupta's favours, Judy's weakness for Bal's charms and even Mrs. Kaul's faith in the Arts, are ironic echoes of Bhuaji's bhakti: ironic firstly because the worship is oriented to the mundane and worldly or, unlike Bhuaji's bhakti, a one-way exploitative relationship without the eternal interplay of creativity between the *bhakta* and God (Feuerstein 1981: 43). Irony, directed at the exploitative relationships is accentuated by the concept of the ideal relationship between worshipper and God. With the novel's concern to show the fight for survival in its different forms in India, a further dimension is added to the irony in that those who are least worldly and manifest human perfecting like Bhuaji are also those who are truer lovers of India. Thus Bhuaji's piety also highlights the differing degrees of receptivity or abhorrence for India: from the heroic idealism of Sudhir's innate love for India to Etta's despair with life in India.

No preface quotation or title signals the philosophical framework as is the case with most of Jhabvala's other novels. There are no allusions to the *Gita*, indeed Bhuaji calls on 'God' rather than Krishna, the God of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In this last of Jhabvala's domestic novels, with its larger number of Western characters and a darker emphasis on the private quests of strangers brought together in a strange land, the concept of *dharma* and its network of duties that bind the personal to the social and cosmic harmony is important but not alluded to. Instead it is subsumed within the *bhakti* concept. Every Hindu's duty is firstly to believe, to 'be attached to one's God', to be a *bhakta*, a true believer. This is the central tenet that works towards the ironic exposure of worldliness and heightens the novel's ironic qualifications of modern day forms of submission, worship and devotion.

In the *Gita*, Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna on *dharma*, detached action, discipline and relinquishment revolves on the oft-repeated premise that Arjuna will be devoted to Krishna:

> Keep your mind on me
> be my devotee, sacrificing, bow to me
> You will come to me, I promise
> for you are dear to me.
>
> (BG: 18, V65, p. 152)

Bhuaji epitomizes the faith that pervades the life of India and is pivotal to the lives of its women (Jung 1987: 36-37). It is a simple, instinctive faith, 'a deep and active belief' in a God that provides ... and gives with both hands' (BP: 9). Bhakti involves complete and total devotion to a chosen God, Siva, Vishnu or more popularly, Krishna (Organ 1974: 173-178). In Bhuaji's case there is a complete submission to the will of God manifested in a life of prayers, devotional songs, visits to the temple, prayer meetings, the company of holy men and complete contentment. She is the dominant influence of the Bal/Mukand household, two families living together in harmony and not the 'seed-bed of ill-will and strife' the men had expected it to be. The harmony is reflected in the name of the other, and Indian, daughter-in-law, Shanti, whose name means peace, tranquillity, the absence of desire, the concomitant of joy (Key Words, BG; [trans.] Miller 1986: 167).(15) Yet Bhuaji's piety and relinquishment of the material world does not stop her from taking part in the business of family life - advising Bal about the future, being companion to the women and the children. She is in fact the true follower of *atmansiddhi* who seeks human perfecting through contact with people and duties of the mundane world (Organ 1974: 30).

As Jhabvala's acknowledgement of Indian spirituality, Bhuaji, like most of Jhabvala's characters, is not exempt from ironic counterpoint. Indeed the qualifications emphasize the general spiritual erosion of modern India and as such the continuity of follies and crimes of the

humorous society. Bhuaji's spirituality belongs to the anonymity of a lower middle-class world, confined to the Mukand and Bal household. It is ineffectual because she is outside the affluent, influential world of the humorous society: even Bal derives no benefit from her *bhakti* except of the most utilitarian kind. Bhuaji's faith is a personal one, simple and so accepting that any man in 'orange robe and his air of freedom and leisure' (BP: 88) is regarded as holy and deserving of worship. Ultimately, Bhuaji's *bhakti*, like Judy and Sudhir's eiron qualities achieve limited success in the unredeemed society.

Judy derives contentment from yielding to the family she has married into and therefore to India. The narrative clearly shows this merging with Bhuaji and Shanti and the harmonious acceptance of India:

> Indeed, at this very moment, sitting with Bhuaji and Shanti and talking in quiet voices, listening to the sounds of people in the street outside, looking up at the sky which was full of moon and thickly sprinkled with stars, she was filled with a sense of trust and happiness that was far beyond any particular cause she could have named.
>
> (BP: 64)

The resolving of the two major conflicts between Judy and Bal (the quarrel over the setting up of a professional theatre at the Cultural Dais which Bal now is no longer interested in, and the proposed move to Bombay) is associated with Bhuaji's serene influence and the effect of the Indian milieu on Judy. In the first incident, it is with 'a vague idea of finding Bhuaji and having a calm, ordinary talk with her' that makes Judy head for a temple by a river (BP: 87). Bhuaji's presence, the calming effect of the evening where all was boundless and open ... everything wrapped in a veil of pearl-grey evening light tinged with pink, and a sadhu's blessing dissolve Judy's anger towards Bal.

Judy's decision to agree to go with Bal to Bombay is made in the Moghal Park with people milling around her, Bhuaji's prayer group bursting into song, the sky 'large', 'beautiful' and 'peaceful' as it silhouettes

the old trees, accentuates each leaf against its silver, and speaks to her:

> She couldn't ever remember having looked up at the sky in England ... nothing had spoken. So one locked oneself up at home ... and grew lonelier and lonelier. Judy could not imagine ever being that lonely here. In the end there was always the sky. Who spoke from the sky here? Why did it seem to her that someone spoke?
>
> (BP: 179)

Judy's receptive awareness of a spiritual, uplifting side to India - 'perhaps Bhuaji was right and that what she spoke and sang about and prayed to, or something very like it was really there' - resembles Sudhir's responsiveness to and pride in the glorious variety of Indian life (BP: 183-184).

The decision to have Bhuaji accompany the family to Bombay is both a recognition on Judy's part of Bhuaji's worth and a reflection of Judy's acceptance and good sense:

> [Gita] was nine now ... Judy had heard many tales about how young girls have to be guarded in India and she did not think she could manage by herself. She needed Bhuaji who knew about these matters. And she needed her for so much else besides.
>
> (BP: 180)

True piety and engagement in family matters make Bhuaji one of Jhabvala's characters who engage in the business of human perfecting. In the short story 'The Old Lady' (LBLF: 7-20) the protagonist, a pious widow, functions like Bhuaji as a foil highlighting the materialism of family and friends. Unlike Bhuaji's case, however, the family is too busy to appreciate the 'calm and peace' their mother can offer. Her constant need to be on her own to meditate and undergo *samadhi* (the state of heightened consciousness) is regarded as eccentric, irritating behaviour of 'Poor Mother'. Bhuaji on the other hand enjoys the family's genuine

love and respect. Both sides benefit spiritually and materially from the harmony, creating an oasis of hope in the backward place they live.

In Judy we have echoes of the acceptance and submission that is similar to Bhuaji's. The depiction of this acceptance of India, the move to Bombay, and submission to Bal is not without ironic overtones. It is part of the larger question of how much a Westerner needs to adapt to India and yet retain her Europeanness and individuality. It is an issue fraught with ambivalence as Jhabvala herself has repeatedly mentioned. On the one level, Judy is both the Westerner who has successfully learnt to 'merge' yet keep a hold of her difference: she is the eiron of low-norm irony who can survive in the humorous society by a judicious combination of keeping her eyes open and her mouth shut, avoiding all illusion and relying on observation and timing to attain her ends (AC: 226). From another perspective there are shades of the scapegoat in Judy's eiron role as self-abnegation is exploited or abused and submission comes close to resignation. In the Introduction to An Experience of India Jhabvala writes:

> To live in India and be at peace one must to a very considerable extent become Indian and adopt Indian attitudes, habits, beliefs, assume if possible an Indian personality. But how is this possible? And even if it were possible - without cheating oneself - would it be desirable? Should one want to try and become something other than what one is?
>
> (AEI: 19)

Judy is portrayed within the questions Jhabvala poses. We see her merging yet retaining her Englishness; her happiness is noted but the reader is also alerted to the sacrifices she makes for her irresponsible, charming husband. She is the dutiful Sita that Bal insists she be (BP: 175), an ironic situation because Bal is no Rama and Judy's story remains open-ended and uncertain. Judy is also the ironic parallel of the European Nora of Ibsen's Doll's House (performed at the Cultural Dais), faced with the consequences of decisions she makes in the name not of freedom, but of

love, duty and a kind of bondage. It is consonant with the character of the novel that Judy's absorption, her sense of *dharma* and the new beginning in Bombay, should appear awkward, ironic and inconclusive.

In the harmonious relationship with her husband's family, and the desire to be and look like everyone else, in sari, her hair in a bun, speaking Hindustani, happily being 'the Indian wife' in a slum area, Judy lives the kind of life Jhabvala posits:

> Sometimes it seems to me how pleasant it would be to say yes and give in and wear a sari and be meek and accepting and see God in a cow.
>
> (AEI: 19-20)

There is however the other side to Judy that lives up partly to what Jhabvala takes to be the other stand possible for the Westerner in India:

> Other times it seems worthwhile to be defiant and European and - all right, be crushed by one's environment, but all the same have made some attempt to remain standing.
>
> (AEI: 20)

She retains her Western attitude in her refusal to accept charity from Mukand when Bal is away without providing for his family. She learns to be 'mean' and 'a proper miser' with her earnings, faithfully keeping twenty five rupees each month as savings. Although 'not happy with her victory' she can be 'defiant' and strong-willed as when she insists Bal buys ice for the sick Prithvi although her husband is ready to go out to meet Kishan Kumar the actor (BP: 23-25).

Towards the end of the novel, a distraught and unhappy Etta begs Judy to leave India with her for Europe. It is an episode that effectively captures the complex and difficult business of survival in India for the Westerner. It brings together two women who show the two opposing ways of the European's life in India: Judy the accepting Westerner and Etta the defiant European in imminent danger of being

crushed by the environment. Yet Judy is shown to have kept her Europeanness in the way she is physically so English - her 'very fine hair', and when Etta tugs at her sari, Judy looking 'young and vigorous and pleasing, with her apple breasts, her bright eyes and her fair hair framing her face' (BP: 174). In this scene we see the possibility of the Westerner merging, retaining her individuality yet not 'drowned' by India.

Yet the ability to fit in with the rhythm of life in India and at the same time remain standing is often ironically undercut by a narrative that alerts us to the fact that acceptance can come dangerously close to resignation and Judy's devotion for Bal can be easily exploited by his irresponsible, unending search for the 'plan to make three *lakhs* of rupees so that I can keep you all in luxury as you deserve' (BP: 63). In the remorselessly selfish world of A Backward Place, Judy's love for Bal is a kind of worship that threatens her good sense, her Europeanness. For Judy, Bal (whose name means 'child', 'boy') is at once the young boy who has to be constantly humoured, and her irresistible Indian lover who brings passion, colour and a sense of adventure so different from the predictable, closed and lonely life she led in England. When Judy finally makes the decision to hand her savings to Bal for the move to Bombay, the narrative, though crisp and non-committal, effectively highlights the difficulty and soul-searching Judy has had to undergo in Bal's uncomplicated happiness as of a child getting what he thinks he deserves:

> [The] next day she went to the bank and drew out all her savings: 725 rupees. That day Bal was very happy.
>
> (BP: 181)

The brief last sentence reminds us of Judy's earlier indulgent thoughts on Bal which reveal the effect of his boyish, extravagant charms on her:

> When Bal was happy, he laughed and laughed, he played and sang .... If he had money in his pockets, he would spend it all on some special treat .... Afterwards he would make love to her

> all night and only go to sleep when it was time for everyone else to get up, a smile still on his face.
>
> (BP: 180)

The other eiron of A Backward Place is Sudhir Bannerjee. He too raises the question of acceptance of India; his need to submit and merge with the country is not that of the Westerner, one born of necessity, but like Krishna Sen Gupta of To Whom She Will, of the intellectual disaffected with his country. Through Sudhir we see the economic problems of the backward place, yet an appreciation also of an idealism backed by effort and commitment, like that of Narayan of Esmond in India and so different from Bal's grandiose schemes.(16)

Sudhir's history provides a view of the anomalies and injustices that exist in his society. Despite a brilliant academic record employment is difficult because in modern-day India he finds that 'no one was interested in an ex-brilliant student whose family may have had connections in the past but had none in the present' (BP: 36). To support his mother and marry off his two sisters respectably Sudhir resorts grudgingly to another feature of job hunting - taking 'chits of recommendation from one great man to the other'. The way Sudhir obtains his position at the Cultural Dais is described in a narrative that hints of the pomposity of government officials who rise on 'fortune' rather than merit and who perpetrate communal favouritism:

> One of the Ministers on whom [Sudhir] had so unprofitably danced attendance a few years earlier ... had since had the good fortune to be promoted to the central Cabinet in Delhi. On one of his visits to Calcutta, he had been invited to grace a function at the evening college at which Sudhir taught; and catching sight of Sudhir (whom he remembered not so much as his petitioner but as the grandson of a distinguished grandfather), he did him the honour of falling into conversation with him, in the course of which he asked him to come to Delhi and help to build up a new cultural centre which had just been founded .... 'We want some of our own Bengali boys up there at the capital,' said the Minister with a chuckle.
>
> (BP: 30-31)

Sudhir's cynicism with the Delhi elite and Mrs. Kaul's snobbery and cultural pretensions, finds expression in an incident related with the hiring and firing of employees. When Mrs. Kaul plans to dismiss Judy for a girl whose parents she wants to oblige, Sudhir opposes the dismissal of one employee on the grounds of wishing to 'slide' another one in. Mrs. Kaul's response typifies the complacency and prejudices of those with power, however small, as with Mrs. Kaul. The text adopts Mrs. Kaul's idiom accentuating the ironic perspective on one of society's leading members who champions 'justice' and abhors 'slackness':

> [Here] she could not follow [Sudhir] for as far as she was concerned it was entirely possible. However she tried one or two arguments more - such as that Judy had been in the job long enough and wasn't it time some one else had a chance - and ended up with the most cogent one of all: did he feel it was right to give employment to a foreigner when there were so many of our nice Indian girls looking for jobs.
>
> (BP: 112)

Spurred on by Jaykar, the ex-revolutionary, and by Judy's faith in Bal which makes her agree to leave the security of Delhi for one of Bal's dreams, Sudhir's idealism is reawakened and he heads for the new Literacy Institute in a newly-opened area of Madya Pradesh. It is his contribution to the fight against 'corruption in high places, the inadequacy of defence preparations, the failure of community development schemes and the impossibility of raising the basic wage level' (BP: 55). It is also an act of faith, of love and devotion to an ideal and a country, like that of Bhuaji for her God.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *atmansiddha* has certain qualities:

> [He is] of stabilized wisdom, the man who has overcome the desires of the flesh, who is at peace with himself, who is stoically indifferent to pleasure and pain, who has no selfish aims or personal hopes and who makes no demands on others.
>
> (Organ 1974: 29)

As Sudhir engages in rightful actions that are muted echoes of the *atmansiddha* in him, the 'stabilized wisdom' he will gradually acquire is captured in the eiron's ability to be inspired by the sheer variety of a place others may find 'backward'. On the journey out of Delhi he recalls the conversation he has had with the fellow passengers, which are as varied as the many physical faces of India. The text continues:

> But it seemed to him now, shut in with an assortment of strangers and travelling through a landscape which was too dark to be seen, and could therefore be only guessed at, that perhaps the paradox was not a paradox after all, or, if it was, was one that pleasurably resolved itself for the sake of him who accepted it and rejoiced in it and gave himself over to it, the way a lover might.
>
> (BP: 184-185)

It is a mark of the irony that underlies A Backward Place even in one of its most positive episodes, an undercurrent of irony exists in the reminder that Sudhir's pursuit of his *sadhana*, the development of his special potentialities, is undertaken in a landscape 'which was too dark to be seen and could therefore be only guessed at'. Sudhir endowed with the qualities of the eiron of first phase irony nevertheless begins a new life in the 'desert regions' which is just as uncertain as Judy's.

The *bhakti* man is one who is devoted and serves his chosen deity. The upside-down values of the humorous society suggested in the title allow Kishan Kumar, and Gupta to be the new gods of society, extracting devotion and sacrifice from worshippers and devotees. The world of A Backward Place depicts the overall recourse to insincere flattery and fawning that characterizes behaviour towards those with money, power or influence. Unlike Bhuaji's *bhakti* the devotion directed towards the new gods is either insincere or misguided.

Dr. Hochstadt, in one of his comments on India, says:

> 'Who, ... could be more generous, more charitable, more all-giving than the Indian millionaire in his old age? .... And for what? .... Only for this: for the greater glory of God.

> Yes, one word from his guru and all will be given for the building of temples, the feeding of Brahmins, the founding of ashrams. For spiritual nourishment. For religion.'
>
> (BP: 105)

It offers insight into the affluent piety of Indian millionaires who turn to religion as penance or for prestige, and the influence of gurus on their disciples. The statement, apart from showing Dr. Hochstadt's superficial impressions of Indian life, ironically highlights Gupta's role as the 'Indian millionaire' who still comparatively young, devotes his time to everything but 'spiritual nourishment'. As one of the 'big business boys' he commands the lesser alazons admiration, flattery and worship. For those like Etta, Gupta's patronage means self-esteem and survival, a kind of deity chosen for practical reasons. It is over Gupta that Etta and Clarissa quarrel as Etta possessively refuses to have her protector be approached for any kind of favour by Clarissa. This possessiveness is ironic for Gupta has no illusions about Etta or any other person's interest in him - as he proudly tells her, they come for his money, not his 'handsome face or cultured personality' (BP: 68).

Etta's protector is in fact an ironic parallel of the might and power of a dynasty whose name he bears, the Gupta rulers of Indian history who at the time created 'possibly the happiest and most civilized regions in the world'. Gupta is wealthy, powerful and corrupt. Etta, calls him 'Gup' or 'Guppy' emphasizing his non-heroic standing and the grossly exploitative nature of their relationship. Clarissa tells Gupta that he has 'a real conqueror's face ... the *veni, vedi, vici* type' (BP: 38). This is true only in the sense that Gupta epitomizes the power that money creates. Gupta's function as a means of emphasizing the babbitry of the times and the power of protectors over expendable alazons is clearly seen in the episode when Etta and Clarissa dance drunkenly to loud gramophone music. The incident, with the 'two women, red and perspiring and almost insanely dishevelled' takes place in Gupta's expensively tasteless suite,

one of the places he brings his mistresses. Watched by Gupta with amused detachment, the scene is an ironic recreation of the way ancient Indian rulers used to be entertained with erotic Indian dancing by the temple dancers and prostitutes. Gupta's dancing memsahibs are also the ironic opposites of the 'nautch girls' who used to entertain rich princes and their Western friends particularly during the Raj.(17) Character, incident and setting come together to emphasize the gross worldliness of the alazons, the immorality at the heart of modern life in India. Also Etta and Clarissa as Gupta's 'nautch girls' present a cogent image of the Westerners' exploited, diminished status in modern India.

Just as Judy and Sudhir's actions are interwoven with the Indian milieu, their responsiveness to the Indian scene a measure of worth, so Etta and Gupta's meetings and the things that Etta notices reveal them as 'self-deceived and deceiving' alazons who because of selfish preoccupations are blind to India's beauty. The sky which 'speaks' to Judy, intimating promise and spirituality is unnoticed by Gupta (BP 36) and too bright and blue for Etta.(18) The Indian milieu with which Gupta and Etta are associated is the secrecy and tackiness of the Rangmahal. It is a secluded holiday spot where Etta hates the dust, ruins, the sound of jackals, and is emotionally affected by the sight of a disused swimming pool, a crumbling bandstand and the thought of meeting other businessmen with their young mistresses (BP: 95-97). Later, true to the callous cruelty which first-phase irony exploits (AC: 226), Gupta, impervious to Etta's pleas to take her with him to a hoteliers' conference abroad, abandons her and leaves with a young Indian mistress. Etta retires to the safety of her flat with the curtains drawn away from a 'too blue sky and the black wings of some birds of prey flashing against it' (BP: 186).(19)

Kishan Kumar, Bal's 'great patron', inspires such love that at the airport rivalrous protégés and admirers come together in a 'coherent, smiling group, feeling it seemed with one heart and that heart full to

overflowing with the pleasure of seeing their hero again' (BP: 76). He is a modern god among his disciples, 'taller than any of them, handsomer, more charming, more expensively, more beautifully dressed' (BP: 76). The character of the popular but shallow and narcissistic film star occurs again in Suraj in the short story 'A Star and Two Girls' (AEI: 46-79). Despite the adoration he enjoys from others (partly as a result of his generosity) Suraj is secretly saddened by his failure to impress his two English friends.(20)

With wry amusement the narrative describes the meeting between Kishan Kumar and followers as between a sublime leader and his disciples. They 'were all in a state of heightened sensibilities' which 'made them feel and even expect that at any moment something else, something even more marvellous, might happen' (BP: 77). When he announces plans to start his own production unit, Bal felt as if 'his mind had burst into flame and in one superb flash of anticipation he had a vision of his own glorious future' (BP: 78). The entire episode balances the excitement and joyous faith in Kishan Kumar with the actor's own vague notions of the production unit, his playing for time, 'to collect a thought or two on the matter' and his role-playing as the generous, genial, famous actor. The scene represents the various one-way adorations that are portrayed in the novel, ironic parallels of the adoration Bhuaji manifests, one in which 'love intensifies as wisdom grows and it, in turn, suffuses wisdom with life' (G.A. Feuerstein quoted in Feuerstein 1980: 43).

Bal's charming susceptibility to dreams and schemes is treated with tolerant amusement yet his irresponsibility adds to the overall subdued tone of the novel. The episode where Bal and his friends commune with nature and 'dip into the Absolute' is amusing yet the text signals the superficiality of their dreams and affords grim foreboding of the future of Judy's family in Bombay.

The tone shifts between good-humoured tolerance and one that is highly critical of the spiritual attitudinizing which is a mere excuse for their laziness and self-indulgent thoughts:

> Stirred by the beauties of nature, they recognized that everything in life was beautiful, and that if one only had faith, all one's hopes would, like the flowers, the trees, and the birds in their nests, inevitably come to ripeness and fruition.
>
> (BP: 132)

In the mellower mood, the 'gentle, dreamy' conversations develop to a lively discussion of life in Bombay:

> There were many pleasures waiting for them. They spoke of wild film star parties, midnight excursions to deserted beaches, brilliant counter-measures against the prohibition laws, and sated themselves on these happy anticipations to such an extent that after a while a reaction set in.
>
> (BP: 132)

The final stage is one of heightened melancholy as they contemplate the Absolute in the sky, fields and the monuments that record human mutability:

> Then they all sighed. There was pleasure in this melancholy. They realized they held the whole of this little world in the hollow of their hand and it was nothing. What were film studios? Midnight parties on __ beaches? Money, fame, Scotch whisky? What, even was Kishan Kumar? They knew the answer, and it filled them with a sense of peace and utter resignation.
>
> (BP: 132)

The novel ends with the Hochstadts' views on a play staged by the Cultural Dais performed in Hindi by Mrs. Kaul's close but untalented friends. They are tolerant and patronising in their appraisal of the play. The narrative picks up the 'fair as always' tone, indicating the Hochstadts' concern to convince themselves of their cultured, humane attitudes rather than any genuine interest in the quality of the play. Sharp irony

is directed at the Hochstadts' opinion of the play as 'a true attempt ... to revive the theatre' and their grandiose faith in India's future as leading in the art and technical achievements. The two final sentences expose the Hochstadts' superficial feelings and knowledge about India:

> But what a store-house of memories they would be taking with them! How greatly they felt themselves enriched by their contact with this fabled land!
>
> BP: 189

The memories they take back with them are not of the true India but of the India they have read about or those that reflect their learning and culture. They are unaware of India's beauty, its refining qualities on those truly receptive to it. Most importantly they are unable to see Etta's 'neurotic' condition and Clarissa's eccentricity as signs of the difficulties of life for the Westerner forced by circumstance to live in India.

The short sections that move the story towards a conclusion add to the impression of disillusionment and alienation the novel presents. The protagonists move towards their separate fates, each one an act of survival. Each attempt is undercut by irony with a sense of inconclusion and crisis. With the eirons' departure, limited acts of freedom for them, the alazons are left behind. Life in India will ultimately destroy Etta and Clarissa. What remains certain is the strength and power wielded by the Guptas, Kishan Kumars and Kauls who in Jaykar's high-flown words will be involved in 'self-seeking pursuits of private pleasure, for vain glorious attempts at personal aggrandisement' (BP: 121). On the periphery of this world are the Shantis and Mukands and Jaykar's son who lives in a badly-built remote housing colony and is too afraid of demotion or dismissal to complain (BP: 120). It confirms the existence of a materially rich, morally bleak society. Yet the novel affirms, in the darkness, a faint but constant glow of light from the existence of the moral eirons. The sombre, subdued emphasis on various kinds of false and

misguided *bhakti* makes it a fitting final novel of the comic ironies and one that appropriately looks out to the darker exploitation by false 'gods' in A New Dominion and Heat and Dust.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LATER IRONIES: A NEW DOMINION, HEAT AND DUST

Introduction

A year after A Backward Place, Jhabvala wrote:

> I must admit that I am no longer interested in India. What I am interested in now is myself in India.
>
> (AEI: 8)

This decision translates itself in Jhabvala's art in a sustained examination in her last two Indian novels, of the fates of various Westerners in India, all in one way or another reflecting Jhabvala's own experience of India. These are dark works, particularly A New Dominion which develops further the portrayal of the Westerners' loneliness and fear in the earlier novels to their victimization and alienation. The portrayal of a bleak and pessimistic world dominated by delusion and error begins effectively with A New Dominion and Heat and Dust. It continues into Jhabvala's last two novels which though set in America are thematically linked with the two Indian novels in their concern with the painful and often unfulfilled quests for love and fulfilment. The harsh and brutal world of A New Dominion and Heat and Dust is built up by a narrative designed to leave an impression of ambivalence and ambiguity of human motives and action. The reader no longer enjoys the comfortable position he experienced with the comedies when stylistic signals of an overt ironic style alert the reader to irony. This is particularly true of A New Dominion. The narrative is detached and distanced, each short chapter offers a character's point of view and the general impression is an interplay of points of view that creates an impression of confusion and hopelessness.

The two works seem to be paired novels; the travelling and the 'heat and dust' Lee of A New Dominion thinks about in the last paragraph of the novel is taken up in the title of the following novel. It is almost as if

Jhabvala decided to write a possible and positive ending to Lee's story other than exploitation and death. The story of the modern quester in Heat and Dust is a more promising female quest than her stepgrandmother's, or Lee's in A New Dominion. Although we are in the dark about the future of Ms. Rivers, the self-reliant protagonist of Heat and Dust, this second novel of Jhabvala's last Indian phase is more optimistic, less nihilistic than A New Dominion. Although this makes it fit less comfortably into the descending Frye schema with which these two novels may be associated, its optimism is nevertheless undercut by a darkly ironic viewpoint that emphasizes meaninglessness at the heart of the human condition. Just when we are applauding Ms. Rivers' good sense, the text, almost towards the end of the story, reveals her emotional vulnerability to India and her unrealistic expectation of spiritual fulfilment may make her yet another victim of India.

The main theme of A New Dominion and Heat and Dust is the search for fulfilment. In A New Dominion, Lee and Margaret seek through Swamiji something more 'pure' and meaningful than the 'modern materialism' they knew in the West. Raymond takes time off from work to 'experiment ... with myself' through his fascination for India's rich cultural heritage. Indians Asha and Gopi seek love and happiness and a sense of belonging from each other. In Heat and Dust, a young English woman journeys to India to 'follow' as far as possible her step-grandmother's story, retracing the circumstances surrounding the earlier woman's own quest for fulfilment in her elopement with a Nawab in 1923. The undertaking is as much a personal quest to know more about her grandfather Douglas' first wife Olivia, as it is the modern protagonist's hope of finding a 'simpler and more natural way of life' in India than the one she has known in the West. The main emphasis for the protagonists is fulfilment through contact with India's religious or spiritual manifestations. The ambiguity of some of the manifestations is highlighted in A New Dominion where

Jhabvala portrays foreign girls broken by an equivocal and manipulative guru. In Heat and Dust human spiritual regeneration is more positively portrayed. This is seen in the modern narrator becoming involved in the life of Satipur, in the positive influence of Indian spirituality, and in her decision to discover for herself in her pilgrimage to the mountains, the nature of Olivia's last years in India after her elopement with the Nawab.

With the seekers being predominantly Westerners, the success of the search for fulfilment becomes a simultaneous capacity to 'merge' with India. Yet it is not just the ability or inability to merge but the nature of the 'merging' that determines the degree of fulfilment and spiritual regeneration possible. Thus in these two novels the quest for fulfilment, spiritual or otherwise, is bound up with the question of each protagonist's ability to open herself to the Indian experience 'without sacrificing individuality and the distinctive virtues of one's own nature' (Gooneratne 1983, 118). Although both novels show aspects that belong to fourth phase irony of Frye's schema, it is the self-destructive nature of the female quester's sexual/spiritual surrender to Swamiji that renders A New Dominion a darker ironic work than Heat and Dust. The alert open-mindedness of the narrator of Heat and Dust (her receptivity and good sense reminiscent of Judy in A Backward Place) makes her not only an effective foil for the victim figure of Olivia but also makes her spiritual fulfilment more meaningful than that of the seekers of A New Dominion.

In moving from domestic comedies and social satire to the theme of spiritual hunger and psychological change, Jhabvala is merely developing interests always present in her work. In The Householder the subject of spiritual fulfilment receives comic treatment in Hans Loewe's rapture over Indian spirituality whilst Prem's hunger for the spiritual life has to take second place to more material concerns of providing for his family.

In the later novel Get Ready for Battle, Vishnu and Sarla Devi in different ways undergo self-imposed isolation for personal and spiritual fulfilment. The isolation of the seekers of Jhabvala's later ironies, self-imposed in most cases, begins with their dislocation from the society they belong to. They are not unlike the rebel-victim heroes of American fiction who in their search for love and freedom, attempt to resist that very society that has severely limited their resources for revolt. The process of their initiation into experience is paradoxically their victimization (Hassan 1961: 40-41). Lee, Margaret and the narrator of Heat and Dust seek something more than the materialistic society they have known; Olivia is stifled by the closed relations and prejudices of Anglo-Indian life and love within the Civil Lines of Satipur; Asha, the non-spiritual seeker, passionate and self-willed, is alienated from the upper class life into which she is born.

The hopeless human misery that develops out of the searchings, one that arises because the protagonists are 'all too human' (AC: 237), is treated with seriousness and compassion by Jhabvala. Satire, which requires a comic target, recedes as Jhabvala portrays protagonists of the ironic mode, characters 'inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity' (AC: 34). Ihab Hassan in his study of the role of the hero as alazon, eiron and pharmakos as a basis for classifying contemporary American literature states that irony is 'the form to which all other forms tend when disintegration overtakes them' (Hassan 1961: 121). This is true, in the way the ironic mode crystallizes aspects of the three other mythoi and develops its own unique mythos. In the protagonists' isolation and the demonic vision, A New Dominion and Heat and Dust show overtones of tragedy without the 'discovery' or 'recognition' which are central to the tragic plot (AC: 41). The suffering of the pharmakos figures of Lee, Margaret and Olivia are ironic versions of

comedy's ritual expulsion of the scapegoat from the redeemed society (AC: 45-46). Frye states that, 'As structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance' (AC: 223). In Jhabvala's ironies we see the quest motif turning into a 'study of self-deception and the dream of wish-fulfilment into nightmare' (Hassan 1961: 121); (AC: 186-187, 223, 228).

Of fourth-phase irony Frye says:

> As a phase of irony in its own right, the fourth phase looks at tragedy, from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes, minimizes the sense of ritual inevitability in tragedy and supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe , and makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau's phrase, "superfluous and evitable." This is the phase of most sincere, explicit realism: it is in general Tolstoy's phase, and also that of a good deal of Hardy and Conrad.
>
> (AC: 237)

Pivotal characters in these works are the pharmakos, all too-human characters vulnerable because their aspirations rely on kindness, understanding and love not forthcoming in an absurd world. Eirons or eiron-like qualities are overshadowed (particularly in A New Dominion) by the self-deceptions of less aware characters who do not 'simply submit to some external necessity but are their own executioners' (Hassan 1961: 151). In Lee and Margaret we have typical figures of the earnest, Western female seeker of Indian spirituality of the sixties and seventies. Social and psychological background explanation is implied: they are products of Western life, misfit idealists of contemporary suburbia looking for connectedness and love away from the 'me-first' ethos of their environment. In India they encounter the same crass materialism they have sought to escape. The new dominion in its post-Independence march towards progress is shown to be no less exploitative and immoral. Racial prejudice and chauvinism exist together with an opportunism that motivates the rich, the politician and the poor alike. In relations between the

Indians and the Westerners the mistreatment and exploitation of the old dominion is now reversed: it is the Indian who now exploits the Westerner. Yet the seekers are wilfully blind to this and become victims of bogus *gurus*, suspect spirituality and narcissistic men.(1)

In Heat and Dust, human misery is 'superfluous and evitable' as we see Olivia, young, bored and flattered by an Indian prince's extravagant attention, eventually fall in love with him. The protagonist's immersion in 'the destructive element' (AC: 237) is closely connected to the subject of the sexual attraction of European women for the Indian male. Whether boyishly handsome or physically unattractive like Swamiji the guru, these men, unreliable, exploitative and charismatic, draw sexual/spiritual devotion and sacrifice from the Western women.

Images of violence, fear, isolation and imprisonment reinforce the predicament of the victims who, recoiling from one form of bondage, inevitably exchange it for another. These images are seen in Jhabvala's earlier fiction in association with Esmond's viciousness towards his wife in Esmond in India and threatening images of physical India for Etta in A Backward Place. In A New Dominion and Heat and Dust, they are consistently present reinforcing the novel's fourth-phase status. Central to the later phases of the ironic mythos is the figure of the tyrant-leader. Images of torture and mutilation typical of irony are associated with the tyrant-leader who, in the sinister human world, is the powerful alazon at the pole opposite to the victim figure (AC: 148). Sinister and unpleasant images are associated with Swamiji of A New Dominion and the Nawab in Heat and Dust (although the latter is a much less evil figure than Swamiji). These two characters are identified not by their names but by their positions, an indication of the power they wield over alazons.

The power of the tyrant figures is an important part of the way A New Dominion and Heat and Dust illustrate the movement of irony to myth, when 'dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to appear'

(AC: 42). The demonic influence of the tyrant-leaders, the suffering of the pharmakos who have for their archetype the figure of Job, the would-be rebel who fails (AC: 42) and the powerful influence and energy of specific characters build up mythic reversions and inversions of the last two novels. They begin a movement that will be continued in the two Western novels later.

With the emphases on the pharmakos and tyrant figures, the eirons in the novels though fewer in number operate as foils to the deluded and victimized. Tolerant, sensible and moderate, they are like the embattled eirons of the comic ironies. For them self-imposed isolation becomes imperative and there are decisive breaks from the absurd society. Raymond in A New Dominion makes the necessary break with Gopi and chastened and disillusioned, leaves India with Miss Charlotte for the security of life in Hazelhurst, England. Ms. Rivers prepares to leave the lowlands and further associations and parallels with Olivia Rivers to begin her life in the mountain *ashram*. This is however ambiguous; her aspirations can mean nothing more than a life of seclusion, a retreat rather like Olivia's with no certainty of fulfilment.

Spiritual striving by seekers predominantly Western, in a place both modern yet in many ways traditional and unchanging, requires a framework slightly modified from the traditional Hindu philosophical framework so effective in contributing to the workings of Jhabvala's irony in the comic ironies. In A New Dominion and Heat and Dust we see Jhabvala's portrayal of the exploitation, misery and sometimes futility in spiritual striving through a framework that draws from both Hindu and Western philosophical thought. The concern in these ironies with the private quests of unhappy, introverted misfits and rebels means that the *dharma* framework of personal duties in relation to family, society and the cosmos as a whole recedes in importance. This is taken up by concepts and ideals that intensify the ironic view of a compulsive search for fulfilment and the misery and

suffering this entails. The most appropriate for these quests of Westerners and Indians and one which is clearly signalled by allusions is a combination of those Hindu ideals that deal with the attainment of liberation from the cycle of rebirth, and the Platonic quest for Truth and Beauty.

In A New Dominion there are aspects of the Platonic seeker in Lee's search for something 'higher' than profane love through Hinduism and Swamiji's brand of enlightenment. The Western feature of the philosophical framework of Jhabvala's later ironies is provided chiefly by the ideas contained in Plato's The Symposium and, to a lesser extent a later complementary work Phaedrus. The philosophy of love as stated by Socrates in both works, though in different settings, becomes the basis for the development of the soul from temporality to eternity, of the individual from the material world to the ideal, from sensuality transcended to a true understanding of Beauty and Truth. The Platonic emphasis of human love as the link between the material and the sublime makes it particularly appropriate as a framework for Lee and Margaret's search for spiritual fulfilment, Raymond's sublimated homosexual longing for Gopi, and Asha's passion for Gopi. In Heat and Dust, there are muted aspects in the two protagonists, of the Platonic seeker of Beauty and Truth who is endowed through love, with new vigour, fulfilment and spiritual awareness. In the modern narrator the Platonic quester is also the seeker who aspires to the *saanyasi* stage, the life of relinquishment and meditation.

As in A Backward Place, the idea of *bhakti* (devotion to a chosen deity) may usefully be applied for a better appreciation of the irony of A New Dominion. Exploitation, particularly sexual, affords ironic parallel to *bhakti* which implies an all-consuming personal love for the deity and resignation to the will of God. The attitude of the seekers to Swamiji,

of Asha and Raymond to Gopi, are ironic echoes of the attitude the devotee or *bhakta* may hold in relation to God.

In *Krishna-bhakti* passionate faith and devotional ritual are directed towards the god Krishna. *Krishna-bhakti* where love of Krishna as God corresponds to sexual love between man and woman, accentuates the ironic view on profane love and sexual longing masquerading as spiritual bonding with one's guru. Allusions to Swamiji and Gopi as *Krishna*-like figures add further to the effectiveness of *Krishna-bhakti* as one of the central religious ideas that off-sets the ironic view of the dark consequences of misplaced faith.

There are also allusions to the teachings of the *Upanishads* in A New Dominion. Swamiji's 'Universal Society for Spiritual Regeneration in the Modern World' appears to be run on *Upanishad* principles. The central object of Upanishad speculation, the identity of the individual soul with the Universal Soul of *Brahman*, and the ideal of absorption of the inconstant individual self with the single spirit of *Brahman*, find demonic echoes in Swamiji's repeated aspiration to 'break', 'mould and make' the disciple Lee anew so that she 'will know that everything is nothing and also that she herself is nothing' (ND: 145-146).

The years 1968-1976 contemporary with A New Dominion and Heat and Dust saw the publication of a number of collections of short stories; 'A Stronger Climate' (1968); 'An Experience of India' (1971) and 'How I Became a Holy Mother' (1976). Many of the stories from these collections and a number of uncollected short stories have the same dark ironic tone of A New Dominion and Heat and Dust. They deal with the subjection of women by exploitative, ruthless or charmingly inadequate men. Images of violence, fear and servitude recur. A number are concerned with the Western female's quest for spiritual fulfilment in India and the identification of this quest with an unscrupulous *guru* figure. Of these the most important are 'A Spiritual Call' (ASC), 'An Experience of India'

(AEI) and 'A Special Fate' (1976). Another group of short stories deals with the carnal/sacred love overlap in the quest for spiritual fulfilment. The relevant short stories are 'The Housewife' (AEI) and 'Lekha' (LBLF). An alternative reading of the Western woman's quest for spirituality is offered in the title story of How I Became a Holy Mother. Brief references will be made to these short stories in the course of the following analysis.

If the later years in India increased Jhabvala's sense of disillusionment and oppression, bringing about the more darkly ironic novels A New Dominion and Heat and Dust, it also produced novels that are more technically sophisticated. The structure of Heat and Dust and the time shifts between contemporary India and that of the Raj of 1923 in Heat and Dust are inspired by Forster's A Passage to India and this will be discussed later. The story of A New Dominion moves though in short chapters with simple, visual, often ironic titles. Sometimes ironic effect is achieved by interweaving in one chapter an incident of humorous effect with that of a serious moral issue, as in the chapter 'Transience' (ND: 99-102). Swamiji is self-deprecating about his lack of learning and indulges in good-natured, playful teasing of Lee and Evie to accept his spelling of the word 'transience' with an 'a'. The episode is in fact one of the early lessons on complete trust and obedience Swamiji instils into the disciples. 'In the world of love two and two do not have to make four - transience does not have to be spelled with an 'e'': in the same way Lee will later have to deny the reality of Swamiji's brutality and return to 'the world of love' he offers.

Contrasts of setting and descriptive details attest to Jhabvala's growing experience with screenplay writing, filming techniques and editing. In A New Dominion the short chapters allow for contrast and show the effect of cinematic focus and fade out techniques. In Heat and Dust, the novelist employs a cutting and splicing technique developed in writing

for the cinema (Gooneratne 1983: 218). The two settings in the story, contemporary and Satipur and Khatm of 1923, alternate and interweave in the narrator's descriptive interpretation of the older woman's letters. Corresponding time, characters, incidents, places and objects create an impression that the lives of the two women fifty years apart run parallel emphasizing not only the relentless human search for fulfilment but the disappointment and suffering the quest entails.

The text of A New Dominion consists of different points of view including a first person narrative in the form of Lee's journal entries. The effect of the shifts in narrational perspectives - a naive contradictory (part) narrator Lee, viewpoints of a number of protagonists and a narrational voice that is mainly detached but can on occasion be mocking and ambiguous - is a text that is ambivalent and unsettling. It creates conflicting levels of meaning and the sense of uncertainty of what is actually happening and what values are left. It emphasizes the fact that human motives are mixed and that Swamiji is the tyrant figure he is because seekers like Lee and Margaret help to make him so. The text in its shifting perspectives allows us to see the 'humanity' of the protagonists of fourth phase irony: there are no pure villains nor blameless heroes in ironic fiction (Hassan 1961: 115).

Narrative strategies are less complex in Heat and Dust; it is confined to Ms. Rivers' first person impressions, ideas and conclusions noted in her journal entries and her descriptive reconstruction of Olivia's story. Ms. Rivers' educated and liberal attitudes and her sensitive but simple, unadorned prose style make her an ideal agent for Jhabvala's irony: they highlight the troubled passions and suffering of the deceiving and self-deceived alazons. As a protagonist of the ironic mode however, Ms. Rivers herself is not exempt from ironic scrutiny. The feminist positives her story offers, particularly the shaping of her story on an older woman's experiences, are undercut by textual signals towards

the end of the novel that reveal that Ms. Rivers herself is a subject for irony. She seems to be guilty of a romantic view of Olivia's last years in India and a preoccupation with a merging with India that will make her as much a victim as Olivia.

There are clear Forsterian parallels of character, incident and structure in these two novels. A New Dominion's three-part structure echoes that of A Passage to India; Raymond's sensitivity and humanitarian values remind us of Fielding and there are echoes of Dr Aziz in the youthful, volatile Gopi. In Heat and Dust, the ironic treatment of the Nawab of Khatm is built on that of Forster's Maharaja of Dewas Senior and specific details of his personal life as mentioned in the letters in The Hill of Devi (1953). These echoes may be seen as signs of Jhabvala moving away from the domestic Indian comedies and characters - that of the role of inside-outsider and initiated-outsider - and asserting her Europeanness by turning to the Anglo-Indian tradition and the best known of its writers. Equally important is the fact that the echoes and parallels are put to ironic use, highlighting inter-racial conflict and prejudice and thereby undercutting Forster's own more idealistic view of the possibility of love and loyalty in East-West friendships. Apart from Ms. Rivers' experiences in Heat and Dust (which are subject to irony) love, friendship and personal relations between Indians and Westerns in Jhabvala's novels are inextricably interwoven with self-seeking, materialistic gain, ulterior motives and political issues. Jhabvala's utilization of Forsterian elements is an affirmation of both her background and consonant with this, of an alienation that sees human actions consistently in terms of a world that is indifferent and fundamentally absurd.

As a final novel that ends her Indian phase Heat and Dust ends on a positive note, offering a muted possibility of happiness for the modern seeker who carrying the child conceived out of harmonious East-West sexual relationship and friendship also suggests a glimmer of hope for Forster's

vision. In Ms. Rivers' sensitivity to the positive changes India has worked on Olivia and on herself, Heat and Dust captures the ambivalence of the author's own feelings about India: the dark and debilitating experience of India and its opposite aspects, its beauty, energy and variety.

Viewed from the larger perspective of her entire oeuvre, the view of India and its effect on the Westerner is dark and desolate. The glimmer of hope at the end of Heat and Dust is ironically counterpointed by the fact that Olivia and Ms. Rivers share parallel experiences that imply little changes between contemporary India and that of 1923. As such, India, whether it is imaged in the dark demonic world of Swamiji, the modernization plans of 'progressive' Indians in A New Dominion or the Nawab's hatred for the Anglo-Indians, moves away from the bustle of life and humorous paradoxes of the earlier works. The India of these two novels is a dark and dangerous place for the Westerner offering glimpses of beauty and love to those who can so easily fall victim to her allure. As such it provides an effective, if sad conclusion to Jhabvala's connection with the Indian world. The distancing is complete in Three Continents, in which India provides the final setting and confirmation of the victimization and destruction of her two young seekers.

A New Dominion (1972)

In the novel Get Ready for Battle, Gautam comments:

> In our country ... religion and the senses are mixed very closely. No, I am not saying that is wrong - on the contrary, what would be more right, how should we drink in our religion but through out senses? .... But there is always a danger ....

> for our women .... Often they mistake what is lower in themselves for a higher manifestation. How many of our women do we see hanging around healthy young swamis, they swoon with love and speak words of ecstasy - to whom? To God? or to the swami.
>
> (GRB: 108-10)

What is said is relevant to A New Dominion because the novel's thematic emphasis is on the two subjects Gautam mentions. The theme of foreign girls broken by a charlatan swami is developed alongside an examination of the position of profane love in the quest for spiritual knowledge. These themes are examined in a story of Westerners brought together by the search for 'higher selfhood' or aesthetic fulfilment and who eventually undergo different degrees of absorption with the country. Although the novel portrays Indian domination over vulnerable, seeking Westerns, it also suggests that the search for connectedness is a vital human need and that in the process of achieving it both Indians and Westerners are subject to, and exert, dominion of one kind or another.

The three-part structure of 'Delhi', 'Benares' and 'Maupur' brings to mind E.M. Forster's classic about India before it became a 'new dominion'. In Jhabvala's 'Delhi' section, corresponding to Forster's 'Mosque', an important incident between Lee and Gopi takes place after Lee is emotionally moved by the view of the mosque and its surroundings (ND: 51-52). Disillusionment with spiritual quest occurs in the second section as it does in Forster's novel. Maupur echoes Mau, the place where the temple is set in Forster's Temple section. These careful correspondences are part of Jhabvala's drawing away from the Indian scene and her movement towards the Western tradition.(2) They create a double distance of the author from her work when it is considered that the Forsterian echoes are devices which form part of Jhabvala's ironies of style and form.(3) The Forsterian three-part structuring is, in a sense, cosmetic but ironically effective. Unlike the swift cause and effect movement of Forster's A Passage to India, there is little change or development in the motivations and actions of Jhabvala's protagonists. The travellers cross paths many

times and human misery repeats itself in episodic manner emphasizing the disconnectedness and repeated misery of the protagonists of Frye's fourth phase irony. With Raymond's retreat to England, the alazons are left on their own and there is little hope of the synthesis and harmony between friends and with India that is suggested in Forster's novel, particularly in its third section.

The three-part structure also exploits irony's concern to show the sense of 'looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity' (AC: 34) by accentuating the ironic fact that the absurdities of the new dominion are neither new nor restricted to particular places. The old animosities, against the English resurface often as strident chauvinism, and national arrogance as with the Delhi elite and politicians. Gopi mouths prejudices and misconceptions of the Westerners' sexuality or lack of it, and the holy woman Banubai is hostile to Raymond and scornful of the Westerners. Sexuality and self-indulgence exert their dominion whether it is in a luxurious hotel room in Delhi, in an isolated *ashram* outside Benares or in a mansion ironically called 'The Retreat' in Maupur. Poverty and mismanagement, old, twin-woes of India continue to exist in Delhi (ND: 62), in the streets of Benares lined with the destitute and dying pilgrims (ND: 168-169) and in the unfinished hospital at Maupur (ND: 229).

The short chapters of A New Dominion with titles reminiscent of a child's reader, add to the distancing and the impersonal narrative voice. The titles are simple, visual and almost all are ironic. A chapter about Gopi's fears of impending marriage arrangements and his separation from Asha, and one that highlights his youth and immaturity is titled 'Gopi the Gay and Gallant Bridegroom' (ND: 113). In 'Bulbul Sings a Folk Song', Asha's servant sings an erotic song of a lovesick woman and a lover with strong arms and thighs thus fanning Asha's longing for Gopi after her temporary period of repentance with the prophetess Banubai.

The narrative moves forward though the use of different points of view: Lee keeps a journal and writes letters to Raymond and Asha, Raymond himself writes to his mother. Thus there are many short chapters in which a character predominates speaking for herself with the irony explicit in self-betrayal or hidden between the honest lines. The light in which the protagonists see each other changes constantly, a situation which affects the reader. The reader superiority that operates for ironic fiction when a kind of link is forged between ironic writer and alert reader is undermined as the text shifts constantly to present differing views of the characters. Various facts of Swamaji are given: he is evil and mad for power, he is the symbol of the answer to modern man's search for instant spirituality, he is grossly sexual yet he is also the genial and friendly guru with ambitions for his movement and a man who provides joy and radiance for Evie and Margaret. In the same way Raymond seen from different viewpoints is unfeeling, the prim English bachelor, a refined caring man, and in sublimating his feelings for Gopi, the strong Westerner who does not give in to India'a allure.

The sense of sparagmos, of confusion and anarchy reigning (AC: 192) and the imagery of sparagmos, that of pain and mutilation (AC: 148) intensify in the last section and at the end in the chapter 'Lee Travels', the journey comes full circle and Lee heads for the old dominion exercised by Swamiji, one she has never really relinquished. The different narrational stances, the structuring of the novel itself, hint at the impossibility of synthesis and the non-attainment of enlightenment or new insights as the travellers continue the hopeless quest for fulfilment.

A great deal of the misery associated with the futile, self-destructive action of fourth phase irony is located in the pharmakos figures of Margaret and Lee. Although she believes she is 'truthful, with others' and 'first of all with herself', Lee's honesty extends only to an acknowledgement of wanting to go back to Swamiji. The nature of the

relationship, her craving to be dominated emotionally and physically by him are left unexamined rendering her as dishonest and self-deluded as the other alazons. This self-deception is shown repeatedly in what she says or sometimes in what she allows herself to say. Lee is emotionally and psychologically susceptible to people, places and atmosphere. Her search for the meaning of life is associated with feelings, not the intellect. What she thinks is spiritual progress, is 'learning' of an emotional nature. Impressions, judgements and decisions are made on 'feeling' and 'emanations'. Her account of Margaret's past (ND: 38) reads like a first-hand account of her own experiences. Yet, in time, her sensitive enthusiasm for Margaret (ND: 39) undergoes a change. Margaret 'is funny', 'not one bit serene' (ND: 92). Her friend's suffering is made little of as a show of faith in Swamijis teachings (ND: 160) and Margaret's death does not affect her until Miss Charlotte's tears and prayers move her to think of her dead friend's past (ND: 239). In Maupur, Lee's first journal entry at Asha's Retreat reveals her destructive devotion to Swamiji. She appears to have forgotten the rape, and she records:

> I always felt good in the ashram but here I feel - not good at all, for many reasons.
>
> (ND: 215)

An alazon can be honest only to a certain extent, for even in her private writing Lee cannot admit her sexual jealousy at Asha and Gopi's togetherness, her jealousy of Margaret when Swamiji shows special attention, to her (ND: 184) or of the disturbing degree of submission he expects of his devotees. What is implicit in Lee's private writing, the rivalry for Swamiji's attention is explicitly ironised in episodes where sexual jealousies surface (ND: 160; 173). Lee's journal entry on Asha and Gopi is an unconscious revelation of her frustration and emotional instability:

> They're together all day. They sit down there in that drawing room .... They both seem to like it here ... In the afternoon they're both in Asha's bedroom and there's no sound from out of there hour after hour. I don't know if they're asleep or not. I'm also in my room but I can't sleep because of the heat.
>
> (ND: 215)

The Lee-Swamiji relationship is an ironic version of the close relationship which should exist between disciple and *guru*, between devotee and her 'Saint' and chosen deity, ('Swami' is an honorific meaning ' Lord'). It depicts also the widespread exploitation of women by bogus 'god-men' (incarnations of gods) that began in the sixties and seventies with the hippy movement and the 'spiritual scene' which Jhabvala would have witnessed. In an interview Jhabvala acknowledges this:

> You had Western women, very introverted, vulnerable, sensitive, all carried to the extreme .... And you had gurus who seemed to me the epitome of a definite Indian type - charismatic, physically magnetic, deeply intuitive. The meeting of these two was just irresistible to me.
>
> (Weinraub 1983: 112)

As guru, Swamiji's treatment of the questers, one that reduces them to passivity and sexual longing is a mockery of the supreme relationship between spiritual guide and devotee. Nirad Chaudhri writes of the psychological power gurus in India enjoy:

> Whenever anyone goes to see a holy man he will find him surrounded by a crowd of women, mostly young, and many of them will be seen to be ministering to his bodily comfort by massaging his feet or fanning him. There can be no doubt that there is a para-erotic streak in this homage, and at times the relationship goes very much further, and if the holy men choose to be sensual the women do not scruple to surrender their honour and chastity to them.
>
> (Chaudhri 1979: 305)

Lee and Margaret's fervent worship of Swamiji and the submission they offer to a false *guru* and god may be ironically viewed though the framework of bhakti, the fervent devotion to a personal god. An important feature of *bhakti* is the belief that the god of one's worship responds to

the worshipper as a person. 'The attitude of god to man, is that of love, mercy and forgiveness and the *bhakta* celebrates these in god. Another feature is that the *bhakta* is a total believer who resigns herself in complete submission to his god. Finally in *bhakti* there is the notion of 'coming to one's god as a refuge' (Organ 1974: 176-177). Devotion to god assumes many forms and the devotee may hold herself as related to god in one or more attitudes. The two most relevant to A New Dominion are firstly the attitude of a servant to her master and of the beloved to her lover as Radha to Krishna (Walker 1968 vol. 1: 138). These aspects of *bhakti* will appear in ironic contradiction or reversal in Swamiji's relations with his devotees.

The suffering that Margaret and Lee undergo is the result of their misplaced worship, a flawed *bhakti* for Swamiji's tyranny:

> In the sinister human world one individual pole is the tyrant – leader, inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is ego – centric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers.
>
> (AC: 148)

Mercurial and charismatic, intelligent and not physically attractive but with a dignity of presence (ND: 146; 170) Swamiji is the deceiving alazon in a world of seekers who, as he perceptively points out, 'would like to sit all day and discuss about themselves' (ND: 208).(4) The idea of a kind of flawed *bhakti* for an undeserving 'god' becomes more apparent in the way the text captures Swamiji's tyrant-leader egoism in his vision of himself as a kind of *Krishna* figure. In Krishnaism, the worship of *Krishna* as mythical hero, as God and particularly as lover, the human and divine become inextricably interwoven in love, or *bhakti*, no longer *bhakti* as devotion but bhakti as fervent passionate love (Siegel 1978: 14). *Krishna-bhakti* as described in the *Bhagavata Purana* is 'not worship out of a sense of duty or mere meditation on God or mere singing of His name, but it is deep affection ... neither knowledge nor any kind of activity, but

is a feeling' (Das Gupta quoted in Siegel 1978: 21). Swamiji becomes a kind of avatar of Krishna as the language used to describe his plans for the movement has overtones of his deification (ND: 142-143). He has enough resources to 'radiate outwards'. Modern transport will allow his 'beams to penetrate into the furtherest corner of the remotest country'. These are allusions to Krishna's divine power. Swamiji will also multiply his presence by availing himself of modern technology and television appearances. This is an ironic echo of *Krishna's* ability to engage in love-play with Radha and the gopis (milkmaids) by multiplying himself so that each devotee is convinced the true Krishna is with her.(5) The work that remains to be done for Lee is conceived in superhuman terms. Swamiji must 'mould and make' Lee, the old Lee must first be 'broken'. Even the use of the word 'we' is ambivalent; it could refer to the cooperative effort required in any difficult undertaking but in the context of Swamiji's vision of his powers, the word assumes royal, cosmic significance.

The women's devotion to Swamiji thus consists of complete submission (as of a servant to her master) and erotic longing (as of Radha for Krishna). These are bizarre inversions to the central tenet of *Krishna-bhakti* and the various *Krishna* cults that the 'devotee could gain access to the sacred, the infinite and eternal through the expression ... of earthly desire' (Siegel 1978: 22). The seekers are not the 'beloved' of their chosen deity; Swamiji is without grace or mercy and the 'refuge' he offers is illusory and marked by images of bondage and fear (ND: 253). His ability to make each woman feel special and singled out for attention is highlighted but the reality of this love is Evie's automaton-like submission, Margaret's death because Swamiji distrusts modern medicine, and the uncertainty of Lee's future.

Swamiji's ability to hide his unscrupulousness under an aura of spirituality and humility is clearly see in the chapter 'Swamiji Eats

Lunch'. The text puts Swamiji's off-hand, casual statements of his plans for Lee against innocuous comments and questions on the food and table etiquette. The statement that the 'old Lee must be broken before the new Lee can be formed' is immediately followed by a question 'Is this the butter knife?' (ND: 144). The assertion that he wants Lee to be his 'completely in heart and soul and ... body' precedes enthusiasm over roly-poly pudding. The narrational voice goes along with this double-view of Swamiji as in an objective, neutral tone it highlights Swamiji's ordinariness:

> He was always asking about these little points of etiquette. He was preparing himself for his foreign tours and did not wish to do small things incorrectly. He learned very fast - perhaps because he was so unembarrassed about it - and ever since his first visit to the hotel dining room had made giant strides forward in his table manners.
>
> (ND: 145)

The view this narrative presents of Swamiji, harmless, eccentric (even Raymond likes him) dedicated to a vision, matches up with Lee's thoughts of him even after his sexual abuse of her:

> How can I not think of him! Sometimes I see him so clearly with his forehead wrinkled up under his cap and he's smiling and beckoning with his eyes and teasing me.
>
> (ND: 216)

In the chapter 'In the Ashram' the narrative reveals Lee's destructive faith in Swamiji in the euphoric, exalted mimicking of her feelings over the personal link she feels established between them during the singing session:

> [Lee] would lower her eyes away from him but she could never do so for long because he seemed to be drawing her back, beckoning to her, telling her come, look up, look at me. And when she did, sure enough, there he was smiling at her - yes! at her alone! so that she had to smile back and sing the way he wanted her to and cry out 'Rama! Gopala! Hari! Krishna! with as much abandon as she could manage. And afterwards, when he distributed the bits of rock sugar ... then too at her turn, as he put it into her mouth, there was this special message for her, this speaking without words that went right

> through her and reached it seemed to her into regions which no one had hitherto penetrated.
>
> (ND: 83)

The sexual undercurrent of the episode is an ironic inversion of Swamiji as the learned guru of *Upanishad* ideas. The word '*Upanishad*' denotes the idea of 'sitting down near' (upa [near] ni [down] and sad [to sit]) and 'may refer to the method by which spiritual truths were communicated, i.e. by a guru whose pupils gathered around him to receive instruction' (Hinnells and Sharpe (eds.) 1972: 21). In the same way Swamiji delivers his *karikas* or sayings to a rapt audience. Whether the lesson is on the spelling of 'transience' and the need for complete love and submission (ND: 101-102) or on the need to 'ripen into our fullest possibility' (ND: 158-159) the 'radiance and bliss' Lee and Evie experience are more sexual than spiritual.

Lee's story is a parody of the three stages of the successful quest romance (AC: 187). The early days at the *ashram*, jealousy of Margaret and rebelliousness may be seen as the agon or conflict of the stage of the perilous journey and preliminary adventures. The episode of Swamiji's sexual abuse and Lee's seeming victory in leaving him ironically parallels the crucial pathos or death-struggle. Lee's sexual frustration at Maupur in Asha's and Gopi's presence and her decision to return to Swamiji having completely wiped out all memory of the sexual incident represent Lee's ironic recognition of her quest. The return to the enemy is anagnorisis or discovery. Throughout all three stages, the text maintains a detached, even tone, leaving the reader to draw her own conclusions, except in Lee's first person account when she betrays her self-deception and occasionally when an intrusive narrative voice, often disconcerting in effect, comments and adds to the multiplicity of viewpoints and general sense of uncertainty. The narrative ironies of the sex-scene and the conclusion of A New Dominion will now be discussed to show the workings of Jhabvala's

'eironic' narrative within the frame of Lee's destructive worship of Swamiji, the victim-devotee of a false god.

There are three perspectives on Lee in this episode (ND: 194-199). There is the Lee who admits to needing Swamiji, an admission couched in language that suggests Swamiji's mystical, spiritual power, and the alazon's refusal to mention the physical attraction, or even love she feels, for her guru. She sees a column of light over his hutment and builds up atmosphere by describing the 'strange sight'.

The thoughts of the second Lee are more ambivalently expressed. This is the Lee whose Western-ness rebels against Swamiji's unfairness, the playing-off of one disciple against another. She records her angry outburst (again left characteristically unspecific), her loathing of him as he abuses her sexually. She is bored and detached with his excesses, and thinks of the idyllic lovemaking with Gopi, finally describing the end in a coldly matter-of-fact manner:

> When he was finished, he turned me out without another word. And I must say I was too glad to get away to want any further conversation.
>
> (ND: 199)

Finally the text is also simultaneously that of the third Lee, the one who is so hypnotised by Swamiji's power that unconsciously she seeks the perverse sexual initiation and brutality. The images of sparagmos, of physical abuse and tearing apart are important here because the narrative describes the victim's suffering as well as indirectly voicing the thoughts of the alazon-narrator who craves to be overpowered. The descriptions of the terrible, terrifying Swamiji, his animal-like behaviour and smell, and the emphasis on 'feeling wounded and torn', feeling 'rage and disgust', become almost an ironic celebration of the link and absorption she so desperately needs:

> Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human beings on human beings.
>
> (Laing 1971: 12)

The text discussed reveals not only the 'outrageous violence' perpetrated by the tyrant-leader on the victim but also the alazon's creation of her own suffering and alienation. In the end, Lee's *bhakti* for her chosen deity leads not to the serenity of a spiritual fulfilment or absorption but a loss of identity and alienation that the narrative in the last part of the novel clearly illustrates (ND: 248-253).

The chapter title 'Lee Travels' echoes that of her first chapter bringing Lee full circle to what the reader sees as ironic fulfilment of her quest for the 'supreme' gifts India can offer. Lee is presented from a number of viewpoints emphasizing her sense of dislocation and ambivalence. To Asha she appears pitiful but potentially dangerous if allowed to stay on and attract Gopi. The narrative points out Lee is 'quite at home' with Asha but almost immediately her restlessness and desire to travel are mentioned. Lee's assertion that she does not want to go back to Swamiji is quickly counteracted by an ironic narrational voice that praises her honesty and in doing so reveals itself as neither neutral nor honest about the way Lee has conducted her affairs:

> But as if Lee could ever be anything but perfectly truthful! That was everything for her - to be truthful, with others, of course, but first of all with herself. She wanted her whole life to be based only on truth found and tested by herself. So now she stood there frowning, searching into herself and determined to pluck up any weeds of falsehood that might have had the temerity to grow there.
>
> (ND: 252)

The note of mockery in the first sentence and in the stilted language of the last is palpable. This view of a confused, deluded Lee is then balanced by the self-control and decisiveness with which she plans her move - 'it wouldn't be like before', 'she would have to say I can't'. - only to be further undercut by the images of isolation, bondage and fear

her mind cannot help but picture. Lee's absorption into the Indian landscape and the shedding of her Western ego in the return to Swamiji are marked by images of little beauty or hope. It is a grim realization of her wish at the beginning of the story to 'forget about being Lee' and of Swamiji's to 'take her far, very far, right to the end if need be' (ND: 209). The non-neutral narrative voice, the shifting images of Lee in this ending, encapsulate the ambivalent tone of the narrative as a whole. It suggests questions that are unanswered. Is the quest for love rendered useless if it is misdirected and the object of love unworthy? Are Lee and Margaret's bliss and sacrifice any less fulfilling than Miss Charlotte's and her faith?

Frye writes of the reappearance of myth in ironic fiction when 'dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to appear' (AC: 42). Swamiji appears not as a 'dying god' but is an ironic version of a god in the way he is worshipped and continues to work his influence on Lee after she has fled from the ashram. There is a kind of 'ritual' to Swamiji's treatment of Lee in the way he appears to orchestrate the course of her future. There is a suggestion in the brutal assault on her, when he is at his most bestial and demonic, that it is part of the ritual, for Lee to be 'broken and remade'. Lee feels he is 'calling' her and there is mock surprise in his 'Oh-ho' ... 'Just see who has come for a visit' - a greeting that will be ominously repeated in Lee's final thoughts on her planned return to Swamiji. Later the sick Margaret with Evie is sent out to Maupur; it is an assertion of Swamiji's power, proof of the women's complete obedience, a symbol of sacrifice and a portend of Lee's future when Margaret's death will be seen as the final fulfilment and Lee will make the journey back to submission and sacrifice. Lee, like Margaret becomes an ironic echo of the mythic figure of human suffering, all too human and vulnerable, yet innocent and undeserving of the victimization.

A New Dominion portrays a dark view of an absurd world where the self and world are shown to be out of joint and truth as fractured as the search for fulfilment. For a novel that is mainly concerned with the Europeans' quest in India, one that begins with the novelist's professed aim to write not about India but 'myself in India', the Hindu philosophical and *bhakti* moral framework is elaborate. Against this framework is portrayed extreme exploitation particularly sexual, on Westerners by Indian characters who are narcissistic, self-indulgent, self-seeking without any redeeming features. The idealistic, humane fervour of the Founder President of the University of Universal Synthesis, to harmonise the world through a synthesis of the language of the mind and the heart, is a small voice in the wilderness of exploitation and absence of commonly accepted values. The new dominion is not only an India newly-independent but a country subjected to the dominion of materialism, of power and affluence.

These aspects of A New Dominion suggest ambiguity and ambivalence not only of human motives and actions but also a questioning of the moral framework itself. The concepts of *bhakti*, *Krishna-bhakti* come under question whether they are not all a sham of exploitation and sexuality. In his analysis on the historical change of the form of *bhakti* from deep devotion and ritual observance to God to one strongly erotic in tone, Nirad Chaudhri, a writer Jhabvala admires, suggests early marriage, polygamy, perpetual widowhood, conditions of living in India, especially climatic, and a general need for escape from suffering as some of the reasons (Chaudhri 1979: 270-273). He concludes thus:

> So, the supreme happiness was to continue the forgetfulness from sexual intercourse indefinitely, and if that could not be done practically the oblivion had to be sought in its vicarious creation in literature and religion. This terrible compulsion was bound to transfer bhakti into sexual enjoyment.
>
> (Chaudhri 1979: 273)

Raymond is wary of Banubai's playful, mildly sexual relationships with Gopi and Asha's sexuality which draws Gopi further into a life of self-indulgence. He remains suspicious of Asha's temporary sublimation of her sexual feelings to maternal love for Gopi. That Raymond, tolerant and educated, should show a barely-suppressed shudder at the sexual latitude offered by *bhakti* is a reflection perhaps of the ironist-writer's deep disillusionment with not only the country and its people but with the very basis of aspects of its culture and religion. Only in Three Continents, Jhabvala's last novel to date, will this same extreme view of the absurdity of human life be portrayed.

In the nightmare world of tragic irony, that of 'bondage and pain and confusion, of perverted or wasted work' (AC: 147), the pharmakos is central. The pharmakos or sacrificed victim 'has to be killed to strengthen the others' (AC: 148). In this respect Margaret is 'central' to A New Dominion, a very important character because Lee's relation with Swamiji and ultimately her future must be seen in terms of Margaret. Her death is an act of faith, a supreme acknowledgement of her devotion to Swamiji and his teachings. Her journey to Maupur and her death are part of Swamiji's plan to bring Lee back to him. In the reversal of values of the absurd world, Margaret's death feeds Swamiji's power for Lee will later choose to regard the death as Margaret having 'gone all the way' (ND: 185). The sexual note in this aptly catches the real nature of the spiritual fulfilment. Subjected to the opposing claims of Swamiji on the one side and Raymond on the other, of the Indian and Western world, of Swamiji's Hinduism and Miss Charlotte's Christianity, of a Christian or Hindu burial, Margaret, in death as in life is subjected to a metaphorical sparagmos, a tearing apart of her sacrificial body.

Margaret's pharmakos role is best seen against the framework of Upanishad philosophy for Swamiji's Universal Society for Spiritual Regeneration in the Modern World is based on its ideals. The main

allusion is to the book that Swamiji is dictating - The Essence of the Upanishads - a 'serious attempt to fit Indian thought into the framework of Western apprehension' (ND: 91). Margaret's 'spiritual regeneration' describes a movement from being 'a very definite kind of girl' ready 'to learn to *take* from India' (ND: 37) to a woman racked by jealousy, petty bickering, hepatitis and eventually a painful death hundreds of miles from her guru. In entrusting herself to Swamiji to 'snatch her up and out of herself - simultaneously destroy and create her' (ND: 37), Margaret becomes an ironic parallel of the Hindu spiritual seeker who strives to lose her individuality so that unity with *Brahman*, The Self or *Atman* is achieved. When there is perfect unity with *Brahman* the devotee is said to have found the pure calm of infinity (Key Words, BG, [trans.] Miller 1986: 165). The bliss that Margaret achieves is confined to the times when Swamiji favours her with his attention. At such moments she is 'radiant' with happiness; she sighs 'with too much happiness, not pain', 'contentment and bliss' light up her pallor and sickness (ND: 184) and 'through her yellow sickness she beamed, she glowed' (ND: 172). Joy at Swamiji's proximity appears to be the highest reward for Margaret who strives, in Swamiji's words to be 'full, whole, round .... one' (ND: 209). The futility of Margaret's surrender to Swamiji is apparent in her last days. Instead of spiritual regeneration Margaret seems to Lee 'not there somehow; disconnected', someone who 'didn't know where she was' (HD: 223-224). As they approach Lee, Margaret and Evie are the only figures on the landscape of dust-coloured sky, air and earth. These images reflect Margaret's dislocation not merely from the *ashram* and Swamiji but the larger isolation from the world other than the one she has allowed Swamiji to build around her. At the Retreat in Maupur Margaret is 'more like a thing than a person' (ND: 228); her 'face didn't mean anything .. it was no longer Margaret's face. There wasn't any Margaret left really' (ND: 230). Ironic synthesis is achieved - 'everything is nothing ... she

herself is nothing' (ND: 146) but it is as a crushed pharmakos that Margaret dies. Like the injured dog that must suffer to the end in Swamiji's lesson (ND: 158-159) Margaret fulfils the believer's highest sacrifice and ripens to her 'fullest possibility'. In refusing Western medication and accepting suffering she is completely faithful to Swamiji's wishes.

The irony of Margaret's situation is intensified by the fact that Margaret's adoption of the Way of Knowledge as the *marga* or method for her spiritual development (ND: 92) yields little knowledge and no salvation. *Jnana marga*, the way of knowledge or wisdom, does not mean intellectual acumen or dialectical power; it is realized experience:

> We are saved from sin only when we live in the presence of God. If we have true insight, right action will take care of itself. Truth cannot but act rightly.
>
> (Radhakrishnan 1980: 59)

Margaret lives for Swamiji's presence, hers is a flawed insight of Swamiji's spirituality. In the strictest sense *jnana* is 'not knowing but being' (Organ 1984: 122). In her mindless devotion to Swamiji Margaret becomes an ironic inversion of the *jnana-marga* follower: she is oblivious to Swamiji's sexual manipulation and her own victimization, existing in a state of 'passive, intuitive being' (AEI: 14-15).

In death, and with Miss Charlotte's tears and prayers, Margaret regains her identity in Lee's eyes

> Then the body on the bed was not only someone who had died and had been expected to die - but was Margaret! Margaret!
>
> (ND: 239)

Although the account is from the emotionally-vulnerable Lee, death is enhancing for Margaret. The beauty of her hair is remarked on, her peace noticed. In her death Margaret attains a measure of the dignity of the suffering Christ the archetypal figure of the incongruously ironic, the

perfectly innocent victim excluded from human society (AC: 42). Margaret's victim aspect is emphasized in an earlier chapter in one of Lee's journal entries (ND: 179-182). It recounts Miss Charlotte's visit to the ashram at the time when Margaret's hepatitis is worsening. Just at the point that Swamiji is talking about Jesus Christ Miss Charlotte asks about Margaret's condition. It is a small but significant incident in a chapter that recounts the strength of Lee and Margaret's devotion to Swamiji. The incident emphasizes Margaret's role as a kind of representative victim figure for doomed Western female seekers. On a larger scale Margaret is the pharmakos who represents the guilt and innocence of irony's very human heroes, their tendency to engineer their own misery, creating suffering that is 'superfluous and evitable' (AC: 237).

> The pharmakos is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes .... He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence.
>
> (AC: 41)

On the one hand Margaret is guilty, acting out the inevitable irony of human life by developing a profane dependence for her guru. On the other, Margaret is innocent for what happens to her happens because of a noble quest, the yearning for fulfilment.

In talking of the pharmakos' death Ihab Hassan suggests that in death a kind of victory is achieved:

> The victory belongs not to [the pharmakos] but to those who may recognize it: to the readers. This is the function of pharmakos to do for us what he cannot do for himself.
>
> (Hassan 1961: 152)

In Margaret's case there is our sense of indignation at her ill-treatment and sickness and initially at her death, even a sense of pity and terror akin to Aristotle's' catharsis. Yet in the ethical world of the novel,

Margaret's death serves little purpose for Lee. 'The light of the scapegoat burns in [her] ashes' (Hassan 1961: 152) yet it is a light insufficient to offer true recognition for Lee. She chooses to ignore the the warning signals of a fellow-quester's fate seeing the death as absorption and a victory:

> Margaret was not to be pitied. Margaret had accomplished something. She had gone all the way.
>
> (NH: 251)

Pity and awe can be muffled by ambiguities. There is no guarantee against the recurrence of Margaret's defeat because ironic fiction is a parody of tragedy's resolution emphasising the impossibility of insight and synthesis, the demonic and victimized.

The theme of sexual exploitation of Western spiritual seekers by unscrupulous guru-figures is the subject of a number of Jhabvala's short stories all written before A New Dominion. 'A Spiritual Call' (1968) tells the story of Daphne an Oxford graduate who travels to India after meeting Swamiji in London. Her happiness persists even after she realizes that 'her feelings were very much more personal than she had hitherto allowed herself to suspect' (ASC: 97). Daphne's Swamiji is like Swamiji of A New Dominion, not handsome but with mesmerizing eyes and a radiant personality. Entrusted with the task of rewriting Swamiji's massive collection of spiritual thoughts Daphne ('fortunate enough to be chosen') anticipates the glazed submissiveness of Evie, and the victimization and misery of the alazons of A New Dominion.

A later uncollected short story, 'A Very Special Fate' (1976), is about an Englishwoman, Nancy who goes to India to work for Dr. Mohanty in the setting up of Synthesis Unlimited. The story repeats the theme of human misery and exploitation when Dr. Mohanty dies of a heart attack on one of his trips overseas (trips on which she is never taken). The ageing Nancy stays on alone in India. A visitor who is the narrator of the story

provides the final and ironic comment on Nancy's sacrifice and absorption with India:

> I suppose in a way she had synthesized with the place, being as worn out and worn down as all the rotting houses and rubbled tombs of Cooch-Nahin.
>
> (A Very Special Fate: 27)

The unnamed narrator of 'An Experience of India' (1971) anticipates both Lee and Margaret. Her experience of India consists of a conscious need 'to be changed' by India and a vulnerability to Indian men, and sexual exploitation by *gurus*. The account of her sexual adventures and travels is not unlike Lee's. There is the same naivety, the susceptibility to feeling and atmosphere and a desire to please and merge with India by giving in sexually. At the end of the story the doomed narrator, abandoned, feverish '[her] heart beating fast ... in fear or in excitement' prepares like Lee, to go travelling again not because of 'a sense of freedom and adventure, but a compulsion that I *have* to do this whether I want to or not' (AEI: 220).

An alternative reading of the Western quest for some kind of spiritual fulfilment, connectedness or wholeness that India can offer is offered by 'How I Became a Holy Mother' (1976). Conceived in the light of the decision to leave India, the story offers a mellower, lighter perspective on a theme that has been the central concern of Jhabvala's darkest novels and short stories. When it is discovered that Vishwa the Master's most promising pupil is sexually impure, it is decided that Katie his English lover (a seeker and ashram-tripper) should accompany him on the European tour to embody the Mother principle to his guru status. After the grandiose philosophising, the outcome is funny yet scathingly critical:

> You might have seen posters of Vishwa and me together, both of us in these white robes, his hair black and curly, mine blonde and straight. I suppose we do make a good couple .... We do

> our best. Its not very hard, mostly we just have to sit there and radiate.
>
> (HIBAHM: 153)

Asha believes there is 'nothing higher' than sexual love (43-44); even thinking of the happy early years with her husband fills her with a 'bliss and happiness' that is 'unbearable'. Whilst Margaret chooses the Way of Knowledge for spiritual fulfilment Asha and Gopi's goal in life is *kama*, that of hedonistic satisfaction, including the whole range of sense gratifications; sexual pleasure, a luxurious lifestyle, drinking and listening to erotic love songs, poems and stories. The goal of *kama* for Asha and Gopi is however not balanced by the two other important goals. The first is *dharma*, the principle of restraint which encompasses the whole complex of law, justice, custom, ethnic and manners. The second is *moksha* the goal for liberation and salvation (Organ 1974: 195). There is a destructive passion that will ultimately intensify Asha's alienation from her brother and Gopi's isolation from his family and from the stability of married life and a financially secure future. In an indirect encouragement to Lee to go back to Swamiji, Asha suggests the liberating possibility of profane love (ND: 252). The irony lies in the fact that this knowledge has little relevance to Asha's life. She is helpless to end a relationship that makes her heart beat 'in premonition and fear' (ND: 251).

Like the protagonists of fourth-phase irony, Asha and Gopi allow themselves to be caught in the 'destructive element'. The purely sexual relationship between an ageing passionate princess and a handsome young man newly-introduced to the good life unfolds against images associated with the misery and suffering of fourth-phase irony and allusions to *Krishna-bhakti* and its profane/spiritual overlap. The analogy and homology between profane and sacred, human and divine love (Siegel 1978: 14) is unrealized in the Swamiji's relationship with the seekers as well

as for Asha who, as her relationship with Gopi intensifies rationalizes to Lee that human love is a legitimate path to 'higher things' (ND: 252).

Th framework accommodates very effectively the irony directed at Gopi. He is the handsome young man Asha worships and his name alerts us to *Krishna bhakti* for the god *Krishna* was pursued and loved by milkmaids, *gopis*, who showed their *bhakti* through sexual love for him. By an ironic, comic inversion, that emphasizes his youth Asha's lover is named Gopi. Later Banubai, the non-sinister corollary to Swamiji, treats Gopi with love and adoration for to her she and Gopi were mother and son in a previous incarnation (ND: 149). There is also flirtatious, mildly sexual playfulness, for Banubai is also a *bhakta* and worships Gopi as *Krishna* the lover. They engage in *leila*, 'Gods play', just as in Banubai's dreams she engages in games with *Krishna* (ND: 165). To Banubai, Gopi's presence is part of God's divine moods and aspects (ND: 166). The ironic correlation between the God *Krishna* and the shallow, egoistic Gopi, a less likeable, less compassionate echo of Dr. Aziz of A Passage to India, is accentuated further by oblique references to Asha and Gopi within the context of the divine love of Krishna and his favourite consort Radha as celebrated in Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*'.(6) The union-separation-reunion of Asha in Delhi, Benares and reunion in Maupur repeats the archetypal motif of religious and secular literature on love (Siegel 1974: xii). The lovers themselves deceived and self-deceiving quote Urdu love poems 'a straining after - all that was finest, and best in human life' to lift their relationship to a higher plane. Like the dusty makeshift ashram circled by barbed wire, the Retreat where Asha takes her lover is associated with images of sparagmos, mystery, pain and suffering. Its decadent splendour recalls sexual intrigues of the past when Asha's father used it as a hideaway for his many lovers; there is an air of neglect and decay in the garden, and stray tigers are known to lurk and the sounds of hyenas and jackals keep Asha awake at night. Asha attempts to see a higher meaning

in her obsession with Gopi - 'Yes there is something higher and we all want to reach it. Only who are we to say which is the right path' (ND: 252). Despite this our last view of Asha is of a troubled woman fearful of losing Gopi. She becomes an ironic parallel of the devotee whose life consists of a holy yearning, the love-in-separation of the *Krishna-bhakta* for her god (Siegel 1974: 139). Whilst the true *bhakta* has the consolation and reward of knowing that Krishna is forever with her if she continues meditating and contemplating on him, Asha is denied this reward. As the story ends, Asha's 'fear and premonition' seem justified as we see Gopi no more the awkward student, but manly and sexually skilled, enjoying for the moment the material benefits of Asha's sexuality.

A New Dominion portrays love in its many aspects. There is the erotic/spiritual longing of the Western seekers for Swamiji, there is Miss Charlotte's Christian love and charity for humanity that aligns her with Raymond's tolerance and caring for his friends. Raymond's love for Gopi is an unrealized tender homosexual yearning, one that is sublimated by the more acceptable generous friendship he shows for the young student. In contrast, Asha's love for Gopi, like her love for Indian music and love poems, is of the senses. Their love is a submission to the dominion of sexuality, self-indulgence and for Gopi, of materialism and self-seeking.

A novel that portrays these aspects of love and with the emphasis on Western seekers suggests a moral frame of reference drawn not only from Hindu ideals but one more representative of the writer's European background. There are echoes of Platonic thought in the novel, particularly in relation to Raymond who travels to India for its art and 'to take time off and experiment .... [with] myself' (ND: 17-18). The central ideas of Platonic love is that Eros, desirous love, is a spiritual birthright, that it forms one of the links between the sensible and the eternal world and that the sincere seekers of Wisdom, the nobler type of lover in a series of graduated moves can attain a hoped-for Good. This

complements the women seekers' search for 'a pure heart', 'higher selfhood' and 'deepest Essence' through Swamiji's brand of Hinduism. The idea of the Platonic quester/lover transcending sensuality and moving from the sensible to the ideal world complements, by way of contrast, the erotic/spiritual overlap of *Krishna-bhakti* and the merging, the togetherness of the spirit and the senses that characterizes much of the Indian outlook on life. The Platonic idea on love and *Krishna bhakti* and Way of Knowledge that frame A New Dominion emphasize not just the high ideals of the seekers but the confusion and unhappiness that result. It is the possibility of sexual exploitation and excess masquerading as religious fervour that causes Raymond to fear for Lee and Gopi's future.

As the beloved of Asha and Raymond, Gopi is subject to both Asha's potentially harmful passion and to Raymond's loving friendship and aesthetic interests. The potential for moral responsibility and self-indulgence, the choice of good and bad influences exist for the other characters as well. For Lee there is Swamiji on one side and Miss Charlotte (with Raymond) on the other, for Asha there is Banubai, imperfect but successful once in helping Asha, and there are Gopi, Bulbul and sexual indulgence. Miss Charlotte and Gopi are the two influences drawing Raymond in opposite directions (Gooneratne 1983: 183). The depiction of such influences particularly on various types of lovers, subtly and unobtrusively evokes the Platonic myth of the soul as charioteer and its subjection to the opposing pulls of the black and white horses as mentioned in the Phaedrus. The soul/driver in Plato's allegorical treatment of the power of passion curbs the lustful black horse: the true lover with sexuality curbed approaches the beloved with reverence and awe (PHA: 63). In A New Dominion Asha, unable to control the violent black horse, indulges in 'monstrous wrong-doing'. Gopi the object of passion is the victim of *kama*, of hedonistic satisfaction, the false lover with no hope of a 'heavenward journey' (PHA: 65). As the

object of Raymond's love, a sensual longing sublimated to loving and caring friendship, Gopi is unable to feel the 'counter-love' of the beloved for the lover. The influence of *kama* is too strong. Indeed Gopi's name hints at his subservience to Asha; not for love of her as the *gopis* for Krishna but for gifts she showers on him. It is ironic proof of what Plato says of the inferior station of the object of passion for the man or woman who is under 'the sway of desire and a slave to pleasure'. (PHA: 38).

Thus it is only with the rational, Fielding-like Raymond that we see a degree of control exercised in matters of love. His homosexual feelings for Gopi, though not the refined Platonic homosexuality that is entirely unphysical, remain unexpressed. With poignant irony the narrative shows that to a certain extent, Raymond's feelings do allow for the 'spiritual procreation' The Symposium and Phaedrus speak of in relation to the efforts of the true lover of wisdom. Raymond's worship of Gopi happens as he conducts his 'fascinating research' on the splendid historical sites and buildings around Delhi. In Platonic fashion he admires the beloved's eyes, lips and feet (ND: 16). His aesthetic intellectual response to India is also his attraction for Gopi:

> He had grown very fond of Indian music. It had become for him like a distillation of everything he loved in Gopi and everything he loved in India. These two were now inextricable.
>
> (ND: 47)

Although the 'modesty and reason' are Raymond's, Gopi's easy affability and childlike submission allow Raymond to attain something of the status and joy of the Platonic lover of wisdom who is able to ascend above the sensible world. Such an instance occurs on one of Raymond's trips with Gopi. The sensations Raymond feels on looking at a painting on some tomb walls, an awareness of all that 'was sensuous, beautiful and desirable in the world' is transposed when he looks into Gopi's face:

> [It] filled him with the same sensations as the painting so that he felt himself brimming over like a glass into which too much wine has been poured.
>
> (ND: 130)

The image subtly catches a similar image Plato uses when Socrates describes the gradual reciprocal love felt by the beloved for his sincere lover. The constant kindness 'and affection' of the lover will cause the beloved to feel love and longing which 'when the heart is full the rest brims over' (PHA: 64).

The effect of this is to leave Raymond so calm and aesthetic that news of marriage plans for Gopi arouses not distress but affection and pleasing visions of Gopi dressed for the wedding (ND: 130). This happiness is repeated later (ND: 152). The irony of this lies in the fact that the happiness is one-way, with Gopi feeling no corresponding understanding or love for Raymond. The beautiful beloved is thus a flawed god without the necessary beauty of soul. The mutual education between lover and loved is unfulfilled as Gopi ironically receives learning for his student phase of life from Asha's profane guidance. For Raymond and Gopi there is not the shared search for fulfilment, one of the features of Platonic love (SYM: 92; PHA: 64).

It is Raymond's eiron qualities that prevent him from being another Peter Kingsley, tutor to Rao Sahib, Asha's brother, and a homosexual who allowed love and India to drive him to suicide. Ultimately Raymond's common sense and rationality alienate him from the others making him 'cold' 'unfeeling', incapable of loving. He is in fact the only traveller in A New Dominion capable of genuine love, caring and tolerance. It is fitting therefore that Raymond should find accord with Miss Charlotte because both show in different ways, aspects of St. Augustine's two levels of love, cupiditas and caritas:

> Love to God and love to neighbour is called caritas; love of the world and love of temporal things is called cupiditas.

(Siegel 1974: 8)

Miss Charlotte's Christian love of God and neighbour is matched by Raymond's caring; both enjoy the art and the beauty of India but 'with a virile, measured, European feeling' (HD: 171) that prevents submersion and leaves them free to head for the safety and charm of home. It is significant too that the Founder-President of the University of Universal Synthesis (its aim to unite Western rationality and Indian feeling) spiritually inspired yet frail and ineffectual, the antithesis of Swamiji, should find a responsive listener in Raymond (ND: 167-168).

The two short stories 'Lekha' (1963) and 'The Housewife' (1971) both written before A New Dominion provide instances of profane love as not just the link between material and eternal worlds but an expression of spiritual knowledge itself. Both women share with their lovers a passion for music and it is in this mutual commitment that transcendence is achieved, something which eludes the seekers of A New Dominion. The profane love between the married woman Lekha and Govind transforms them into avatars of Radha and Krishna, the divine lovers. At a party when Lekha dances while Govind plays the *dholak* and sings a love song, we are shown that the artistic harmony and sexual passion of the lovers lift them to a higher plane. The lovers separate, but for the brief period of their love they have touched transcendence. Shakuntala of 'The Housewife' gives up the comforts of affluent married life to be with her music teacher. The story ends with the simultaneous spiritual bliss and sexual ecstasy they share in a narrative that picks up the language of the music that has drawn them together:

> He entered her at the moment when, the structure of the raga having been expounded, the combination of notes was being played up and down, backwards and forwards, very fast. There was no going back from here, she knew. But who would want to go back, who would exchange this blessed state for any other?

(AEI: 161)

In these two short stories Jhabvala blends personal interest in Indian traditional music with a portrayal of the profane/spiritual love motif as bringing with it a possibility of spiritual fulfilment. As such despite the ambivalence of the endings, they are happier stories than the dark and pessimistic view of human aspirations that A New Dominion presents.

The alazon lovers of A New Dominion, Lee, Margaret, Asha share with Shakuntala and Lekha the 'madness' of love that Plato speaks of (PHA: 56). They are lovers 'indifferent to ordinary prudential concerns', each goes to the object of his love, 'into it'; 'he goes out of himself; he is not himself' (Norton and Kille 1971: 115). It is this madness that allows the questers glimpses of release in the happiness they feel at the proximity of their beloved. But the 'madness' of the protagonists falls short of 'divine'; it is not the releasing madness that presages knowledge of the eternal world. They are unable to 'let the higher elements in their minds prevail ... and pass their time on earth in happiness and harmony' (PHA: 65). Asha's eros, Lee and Margaret's yielding for absorption belong to the dark world of fourth phase irony for they are feelings without the key to the Platonic quest or Hindu absorption: 'the emotion of love directed aright' (Introd. PHA, [trans.] Hamilton 1973: 8).

For the central seekers Lee and Margaret there is 'the unconditional giving up of all' that the love of God requires. Their sacrifice, 'an act of violation, against ordinary expected loyalties', 'a breakdown of the predictable and the secure' (Ramanujan 1987: 51) is a wasted exercise. They are wilfully blind to the guru who is a false god and guide and an undeserving object of worship. As such their quests belong to the world of general irony where human aspiration is meaningless and the world is marked by incoherence and impossibility of synthesis.

Heat and Dust (1975)

In Heat and Dust, Ms. Rivers, the unnamed narrator of the story journeys to India to reconstruct and re-live, through the letters written by her stepgrandmother Olivia to her sister Marcia, the story of Olivia's love affair with an Indian prince in 1923. In doing so she shapes the course of her life, deciding to stay on and discover for herself the nature of Olivia's last years in India, years spent practically alone without letters or contact with the outside world. The mystery of Olivia's thirty-odd years in India and the uncertainty of Ms. Rivers' future are part of the question of 'surviving and seeing how far you can survive in India' that is explored in Heat and Dust. Less bleak and savage than A New Dominion, it seems almost a kind of answer to the breakdown of values and the impossibility of survival for the Westerner that the earlier novel portrays. The story of the modern narrator who unlike Lee of A New Dominion, or Olivia, is able to a certain extent to plan her life, should be seen as a foil to the darker earlier story. The irony of the novel lies in this playing off of the modern story against the earlier one. As we shall see, with the development of the story the narrator moves from being merely ironic commentator to being herself subject to ironic scrutiny. As a result of this, further irony is located in the open ending of the novel in which the modern narrator for all her good sense, is as lost to the future as Olivia was. The text exposes weaknesses and delusions, particularly of the lover Olivia, against a background of characters and actions that show the misery and suffering and self-destruction typical of fourth phase irony. The quest for fulfilment in human or spiritual love is counterpointed against the Platonic ideals of Love and Beauty and against Hindu ideals of

renunciation and final release. What emerges is not the fulfilment of Plato's true seeker or the Hindu liberated from the cycle of *samsara* or suffering, but a story that highlights human weaknesses, relentlessly propelling victims towards and into 'the destructive element'. The novel's portrayal of two opposing features that of a general irony of life in which human actions are rendered absurd, and the positive questing of the modern narrator, reflect the personal story of the author herself and her survival in India for twenty-five years. Heat and Dust portrays the dialectic of Jhabvala's love for India and its ability to educate and its opposite: her disillusionment with India and its debilitating, destructive effect on the Westerner.

The title of the novel hints at the dual philosophical framework that operates in Heat and Dust, particularly in relation to Ms. Rivers. It refers not merely to the eternal heat and dust of the Indian landscape, but alludes to two important religious and literary works. The title recalls words from a famous moral work, Milton's Areopagitica:

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.
>
> (Milton 1958: 158)

The title also recalls, more obliquely than with Milton's lines, *Krishna's* exhortation to Arjuna to engage in the heat and dust of battle against the enemy, the sons of Dhritarashtra and their army in the Second Teaching of the Bhagavad Gita (BG: 29-39). The battlefield of Kurustektra is the field of sacred duty and Arjuna is urged to carry out his ordained duty as a warrior, to engage in necessary action but to be unconcerned with the fruits of action.

Ms. Rivers' disciplined, objective retracing of her stepgrandmother's story and engaging in the life at Satipur make her a 'sincere seeker' within both Western and Hindu norms. There is thus a

kind of irony in the title in that it alerts the initiated reader to the implications of 'heat and dust' beyond the merely physical discomforts India is associated with. It directs our attention to the special qualities of the modern narrator; reminds us of 'the fugitive and cloistered virtue[s]' of Anglo-Indian women like Mrs. Saunders who regards all Indian men as lascivious, and accentuates the similarities and differences in the lives of the two female protagonists of Heat and Dust and their coming to terms with the heat and dust of life in India.

The multi-faceted nature of the title that alerts us to Hindu and Western thought on virtue and religious duty, appropriately reinforces the dual philosophical frame that operates for Heat and Dust. Although allusions are limited and the moral frame is muted, and despite ironic undercutting of Ms. Rivers' quest for spiritual knowledge, the modern narrator's self-education and merging with India follow more closely than any other Western protagonist Jhabvala has created, the path of the Hindu seeker for *moksha* (freedom) and the Platonic quest for Love and Truth. In an ironic way the more muted functioning of the framework in Heat and Dust is as effective in highlighting the special qualities of Ms. Rivers as the denser allusive framework of A New Dominion serves to emphasize the immorality of the Indian characters and indeed of the breakdown of the moral framework itself.

The story unravels against a background of three inter-related worlds. There is the new dominion of India, burdened by problems of inefficiency, lack of social facilities and poverty of the masses yet sought by Western seekers for its spirituality. There is the older world of India of the Raj, where both the English and the princes they control are insincere and dishonest. Finally there is an India that encompasses both past and present built up by echoes and correlations and suggesting a sense of continuity and minimal change. The towns with names heavy with irony - Khatm, meaning 'finished' and 'Satipur', 'the town of the faithful

wife' - remain as do the miles of dun earth and the heat and dust, to provide links between the two women and the two periods. There is careful detailing and structuring of sections through parallel incidents and characters, substantiated by echoes and repetition of words, phrases, objects and seasonal setting. The narrative moves backwards and forwards linking the two stories separated by more than fifty years. The development of 'a literary form of flashback' (Gooneratne 1983: 41) to parallel and contrast events of the two periods is derived from the author's use of film cutting and editing to off-set scenes for effective counterpoint.(7) The transitions between past and present are also carefully worked out. The ending of an episode is usually connected thematically with the beginning of the subsequent one. Evidence of her work in films is seen for example in just one of many examples. The scene where Olivia plans to have an abortion cuts to that of contemporary India with an Indian midwife greeting Ms. Rivers as a potential customer for an abortion (HD: 162). It would be easy to imagine a transition by means of a filmic 'dissolve' from Olivia trapped but defiant to Ms. Rivers' easy relaxed manner and quiet happiness over her pregnancy. The effect of such a structuring is to highlight the search for love and happiness and its corollary, the reality of disappointment and suffering as constants unaffected by time and history.(8)

Aspects of fourth phase irony may be seen in Heat and Dust in both Olivia and the modern narrator's story but are mainly located in the 1923 story. The 'humanity' of the protagonists, the psychological explanations of catastrophe, the sense of human misery as being 'superfluous and evitable' revolve round the forbidden sexual association of a bored, petulant young Englishwoman and a Nawab representative of the frustrated minor princelings who detest the Anglo-Indians. The experiences of others in contemporary India, particularly those on the fringe of society - the Western seekers, the beggar-womam Leelavati, Chid the English boy turned

(temporary) holy man - also contribute to the sense of catastrophe and misery that characterize fourth phase irony. Olivia's love for the Nawab and her search for a fulfilment neither Douglas nor Anglo-Indian life can offer provide ironic parallels to the quest theme of romance. The dragon-killing theme of romance (AC: 189) is inverted in Olivia's story as the Nawab is both beloved and tyrant-leader. The 'discovery' Olivia undergoes at the end of her story is left unarticulated - her survival is shrouded in silence. Olivia's story is associated with the turning of 'wish-fulfilment into nightmare' (Hassan 1961: 121), the images of sparagmos, of mutilation and horror, and with the theme of sparagmos, that is the absence of heroism and effective action (AC: 148; 192). The modern narrator chooses to interpret Olivia's solitary existence as in itself evidence of a new strength Olivia has acquired from India (HD: 160). It is partly to find out 'what she became later' that Ms. Rivers decides to stay on ending the story on a double ambivalence that intensifies the darker ironic aspects of Heat and Dust.

Major Minnies the political agent at Satipur and writer of a monograph on 'the influence of India on the European consciousness and character', regards the Nawab's victimization of Olivia as fitting in with his theories of Westerners 'who had gone in too far' into 'the other dimension' or 'element' (HD: 170-171). As pharmakos and scapegoat, she is 'banished' from the thoughts of the other Anglo-Indians, her memory regarded as 'something dark and terrible' (HD: 2). Her daily journeys past the Crawford's house, past the Saunders', 'past the church and cemetery' (HD: 41) towards Khatm and the Nawab, is a crossing of the Civil Lines of sedate orderly Anglo-Indian Satipur into what Beth Crawford regards as the world 'of oriental privacies - mysteries - that should not be disturbed ... dark regions ... outside her sphere of action or imagination' (HD: 169). Like Daphne Manners in Scott's Raj Quartet Olivia's sexual impulsiveness and her break across racial lines single her

out as the Anglo-Indian who is incapable of playing her 'part' or 'role'. Her self-imposed isolation in a house on the mountain side is a kind of ritual death of the pharmakos who has to be killed or banished to strengthen the other alazons (AC: 148). She is Anglo-India's 'rotten specimen' an example of the European who has allowed 'herself to love too much' and 'to become softened (like Indians)' (HD: 170-171).

The Nawab, though not as sinister a figure as Swamiji of A New Dominion is nevertheless the tyrant-figure of irony whose power over the pharmakos and other alazons, Harry, the *dacoits*, is increased by their submission to his will (AC: 148). His charm and presence, his generosity and lavish lifestyle are some of the qualities that make him an 'irresistible force' for the bored young wife of a busy dedicated officer who can offer no more than a dull, restricted social life for her. These provide the basis for the 'social and psychological factors for catastrophe', an important aspect of fourth phase irony. Olivia's friendship with the Nawab and Harry develops with her growing isolation from Anglo-Indian company: the other wives are not only older but they leave for the cool of the Simla hills and Olivia is left with a caring but boring husband too preoccupied with administrative problems. Alone in her house, barricaded against the heat and dust, the Nawab's company is exciting. Sparagmos, the archetypal theme of irony and satire (AC: 192) and conveyed in images of mutilation and tearing apart of the sacrificial body is mainly associated with Olivia's relations with the Nawab. Olivia, the victim undergoes a kind of metaphorical tearing apart as she wrestles between passion for the Nawab and loyalty and affection for her husband. The pregnancy marks the final severance between Olivia and the Anglo-Indian world: the tyrant-leader, 'inscrutable', 'ruthless' and with an 'insatiable will' commands the loyalty of his followers (AC: 148) and Olivia is convinced the baby is the Nawab's by the sheer fact that he is an 'irresistible force of nature' (HD: 161). With the pregnancy Olivia

enters 'the world of the demonic, of bondage and pain and confusion' (AC: 147). It is the world of intrigue and cruel vengeance, of stories of the Begum's attempt at poisoning one of the mistresses of the old Nawab, and of poisoned garments that kill the wearer instantly (HD: 151). The abortion arranged by the Begum and in her presence is the final mutilation on the pharmakos figure: the physical tearing apart is repeated in Olivia's flight and separation from the Anglo-Indian world for the Palace of Khatm and finally to the mountain house.

In is significant that during the abortion Olivia should be aware of the Begum's presence and at the height of the pain, suddenly realize how much the Begum looks like the Nawab:

> Although the midwife worked swiftly and skilfully, the twig hurt Olivia as it entered into her. She was unable to stifle a cry. Then the Begum bent over her to look into her face and Olivia stared back at her. She *did* look like the Nawab, very much.
>
> (HD: 168)

It is an indication of the Begum's power and the similarity of interests they share, their power, wealth and their royal lifestyle. The pharmakos fails to appreciate this when she refers to the Begum and her ladies as 'Those poor old things in the purdah quarters' (HD: 152) and proudly ignores the 'injustice' done her when she is not taken to meet the Begum.

Heroism and effective action too are absent in the hopeless situation between the Nawab and the Anglo-Indians: manipulated by the British officers who regard him as an upstart ruler of a poor, problematic state, the Nawab turns to the services of the dacoits or (brigands) who rob and pillage his own people (HD: 146). Unable to oppose the Anglo-Indians in the way he would like to ('fight your enemies and kill them' [HD: 136]) the Nawab recounts with pride and relish the bloody exploits of his ancestor Aminullah Khan (HD: 136-137).

Our view of the later Nawab, comical and ineffectual in his anger and frustration with the British, intensifies the sense of hopelessness of

Olivia's passion for her Indian prince and in the Nawab's own thoughts, of 'the transience of worldly glory' (HD: 177). The Nawab fat, 'womanly', 'softer and milder' haggles with the British authorities for an increase in income after Khatm is placed under the administration of a prime minister. The old self-importance is still there: the narrative points out that the Nawab feels the British 'were completely un-understanding, they had no conception at all of the obligations a ruler like himself had to discharge' (HD: 176). These include maintaining the Palace, supporting three women, the Begum, his wife, and Olivia, and numerous hangers-on. These, together with afternoon visits to restaurants for cream pastries and problems over missing state jewels, result in fewer visits to Olivia in her mountain dwelling. A poignant sense of loss and suffering in the Olivia-Nawab relationship is captured in the narrator's coldly objective conclusion to the description of Olivia's house:

> There is a row of stables outside but all they ever stabled was the sedan-chair - it is still there, though dusty and broken - in which the Nawab was carried up and down the mountain. He had got too fat and lazy to climb.
>
> (HD: 175)

As mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter, Jhabvala's drawing away from India and the assertion of her Europeanness is seen in the Forsterian echoes put mainly to ironic use, in the last two Indian novels. In A New Dominion there are ironic echoes of Passage to India in the structuring of the novel and in its protagonists.(9) The parallels of Heat and Dust apart from the setting of India of the Raj of 1923, are less obvious because Jhabvala draws mainly from the lesser known letters from The Hill of Devi (1953) which Forster wrote to his mother and various relatives in 1921 when he served as private secretary to the Maharajah Dewas Senior. It is a final assertion of her outsider status; the turning to Forster is a deliberate even ironic acceptance of the fact that 'If I must be considered anything, then let it be as one of those European

writers who have written about India'(Agarwal 1974: 36). Once again the Forsterian elements are used for ironic purposes; to highlight weaknesses, to off-set character parallels and to suggest the impossibility of meaningful friendship and harmony between Westerners and Indians.

Richard Cronin draws our attention to an interesting parallel between Jhabvala's Nawab and Forster's beloved Maharaja Tukaji Rao III. Forster's Hindu prince married early, the marriage broke down causing a rift with the bride's father, the Maharaja of Kolhapur when the child bride lonely, unhappy and with a tendency to hysteria eventually is sent home to her family (Forster 1953: 46-49). These marital problems are echoed in the Nawab's unhappiness over his estranged wife Sandy and his resentment over the British favouring of Sandy's father because Cabobpur is a richer state than Khatm. There is also mention in Forster's letters of the ruining of state finance through lavish overspending, a situation the Nawab of Khatm makes worse by supporting and living off the loot of brigands. There is also Forster's discovery of the Maharaja's ageing collection of articles bought and unused; this is echoed in Olivia's amazement at the rusting equipment and assorted collection of goods ordered by the Nawab (Forster 1953: 31-33; ND: 86).(10) Finally Forster himself is the historical model for the homosexual Harry, the Nawab's English friend who worships him just as Forster loved the Maharaja. The character parallels suggest two things: firstly that the Nawab though an attractive compelling personality lacks the Maharajah's 'nobility, unselfishness, introspectiveness' (Forster 1953: 23); secondly that the tolerant affection between Fielding and the Maharaja is not echoed in the intense worship Harry shows for his troubled, volatile prince. These points suggest that it is perhaps in its themes that Heat and Dust is closely related to A Passage to India. As in the earlier novel, Heat and Dust shows that love, power and race are intertwined and no relationships are simply personal. More importantly the building up of careful

similarities, between the Maharaja and the Nawab, emphasizes the fact that there is no possibility of real connectedness either in the Nawab's personal relationship with Olivia and Harry or on the political level. Only in the baby Ms. Rivers carries is there some acknowledgment of a harmonious East-West association. Ms. Rivers having established close personal relations journeys upwards buoyed by her pregnancy and ready for a higher step in her merging with India. The uncertainty of the future of a Western female seeker in an isolated ashram is however as ambivalent as the promise of closer ties between an Indian and an Englishman at the end of A Passage to India.

To the end we are left uncertain as to the Nawab's intentions in his love affair with her. Eager to show the Anglo-Indians his power the Nawab's actions could be taken as his way of fighting them by conducting an affair with the wife of one of their officers. The reader is reminded of the Nawab's triumphant statements to Harry about the pregnancy: 'Wait till my son is born ... then they'll laugh from the other side of their mouths'. He gleefully anticipates that when the baby is born, 'Douglas and all [are] going to have the shock of their lives' (HD: 161). There are ironic overtones too in the way the narrative relates the Nawab's reaction to the news of Olivia's pregnancy. The incident highlights the precarious, uncertain nature of their relationship and the ambivalence of motives behind the Nawab's actions. The narrative effectively captures the rationalization and therefore the disappointment Olivia might have felt on getting so little response from her lover. Finally the acknowledgement of 'ladies lurking behind curtains' suggests the power of the Begum and produces a sense of foreboding for the whole affair:

> She had to tell him in a low voice and he could not react much as they were in the middle of the Palace with servants and followers on every landing and who knew what ladies lurking behind curtains.
>
> (HD: 145)

Olivia's 'humanity', that which causes her immersion in the 'destructive element', is effectively highlighted through her stepgranddaughter's writing. As the daily meetings continue and Olivia becomes more attracted to the Nawab, the growing rift with her husband and the psychological lee-way Olivia allows herself are ironically shown in the narrative. Douglas is not told of the first important outing to the Baba Firdaus shrine. Olivia's self-deceiving, couched in the various excuse she writes to her sister, is clearly seen:

> Olivia never told Douglas about the Nawab's picnic. She had meant to as soon as she got home, but it so happened that he had been held up .... and was even later than usual. She asked him many questions, and as he loved talking about his work (she wasn't always all that interested) the time just went and she never did get round to telling him about her day. And when he left that morning, she was still asleep.
>
> (HD: 48)

Another entry offers a stronger ironic view of Olivia's self-deception. As her fascination for the Nawab grows, Olivia plays the role of 'lively, gay' wife:

> She understood that, once Douglas was home, he just wanted to *be* home, with her ... leaving outside all the heat and problems .... So she never touched on any subject that might cast even the faintest shadow on him - like for instance, that of the Nawab - but chattered to him about everything she could think of that had nothing to do with India.
>
> (HD: 85)

Finally, Harry's ill-health provides the necessary excuses and psychological crutch for Olivia's meetings with the Nawab:

> One day Olivia told Douglas that Harry was lying ill at Khatm and that she wanted to go and visit him. Douglas said "Oh?" and nothing further. She took this as the permission she wanted: from now on, she decided, Douglas *knew* that she went to Khatm, she had told him, he was apprised of the facts.
>
> (HD: 115)

In the modern story the human misery and tendency towards self-destructive action exploited by fourth-phase irony centre not on Ms.

Rivers but on most of the other characters with whom she associates in her seven-month stay in Satipur. Superstition and ancient charms of the past live on in the cures for Inder Lal's epileptic, mentally-disturbed wife Ritu (HD: 53, 81). If Inder Lal, a struggling, insecure clerk at the waterworks department is the modern-day ironic counterpart of the Nawab, Ritu's mental sickness echoes that of the Nawab's wife Sandy who is 'mentally not well'. The pillaging of India's wealth by the Nawab, the dacoits, the Begum and by the English rulers themselves, find ironic echoes in the activities of rich Westernized Indians like Karim, the Nawab's nephew and heir to the Palace, and his wife Kitty, whose feelings for India are dictated by the financial gains they can obtain from selling their uncle's treasures and taking part in the widespread renovation of India's monuments for tourists. Chid, the spiritual seeker who has not lost his Midlands accent, appears to be the modern ironic version of Douglas. Indeed the modern 'rebirths' of the Anglo-Indians who refer to the Nawab as 'Our Friend' and 'our boy' are, apart from Ms. Rivers, mindless derelict drifters, like Chid, seeking escape from Western materialism but finding 'dysentry' instead of 'peace'. Ms. Rivers' early journal entry captures a young English couple's rapturous account of their introduction to Indian spirituality and anticipates not only Olivia's victimization but also the later ambivalent surrender to India of Ms. Rivers when she comes under ironic scrutiny herself:

> The swami, in a soft caressing voice very suitable to the subject, told them that Universal Love was an ocean of sweetness that lapped all round humanity and enfolded them in tides of honey. He had melting eyes and a smile of joy. The atmosphere was also very beautiful with jasmine, incense and banana leaves .... Afterwards they had sung hymns in Hindi which were also about the flowing ocean of love. The young man and his girl had come away from this meeting with such exalted feelings that they could not speak for a long time; but when they could, they agreed that ... they must set off for India without delay.
>
> (HD: 22)

Although interlinked characters and incidents create a sense of the continuity of a world of 'bondage and misery', Douglas Rivers' granddaughter is shown to weather the heat and dust, to rise above worldly matters and relationships and make the decision to 'go higher'. The modern story is more positive not merely because the central eiron is an independent young woman able to cross barriers of race, politics and sex as Olivia is unable to do. More importantly her experiences allow movement from the sensual towards the sublime, from the sensible to the ideal. This is the central thesis of Plato's philosophy of love as contained in The Symposium and is crucial to our appreciation of the characterization of Ms. Rivers and her role as foil to Olivia's darker, more ironic quest for love.

At the dinner party in The Symposium Socrates tells Agathon that for the lover and seeker there is the sense of lack and need that propel him towards the object of his affection (SYM: 76-78). Ms. Rivers begins with a kind of 'heart-hunger' (Taylor 1971: 209) not so much for a lover but for an ideal that begins with a need to 'follow' an old love story, 'the hope of finding a simpler and more natural way of life' from the material self-sufficiency she has known so far (AD: 52, 95). Setting up home in Satipur, integrating with its inhabitants and finding love and affection in Inder Lal are some of the 'essentials of [worldly] life' Ms. Rivers sets out to fulfil. To the end she is shown to possess the 'heart-hunger' as she decides to journey up the mountain to fill out Olivia's story and at the same time as a 'sincere seeker' to glimpse the 'vision' that a journey away from the heat and dust might offer. The narrator's quest shows that she possesses:

> The only Eros deserving of our praises ... amor ascendens, a desirous going forth of the soul in quest of a good which is above her.
>
> (Taylor 1971: 209)

In Ms. Rivers' story there are muted, understated parallels to the various stages experienced by Socrates' seeker of Truth and Beauty: from

human and physical relationships to an abundance of beautiful and magnificent sentiments and ideas, a strengthening and increase in stature by experience and finally the hoped-for supreme initiation into the knowledge of Beauty itself (SYM: 93-95).

In contrast, Olivia's relationship with the Nawab and with Douglas is marked by a poignant sense of Olivia's misery and loneliness as of a lover caught in lower Eros. An episode between Olivia and Douglas appropriately captures their states as imperfect Platonic lovers striving for physical parenthood:

> It was about this time - the time of her growing friendship with the Nawab - that she and Douglas began to speak seriously about having children .... Olivia felt that someone as handsome, as perfect as Douglas should be procreated many times over! She teased him about it - she said he had only married her so as to people the world with a whole lot of Douglases. Not at all, he said; it was Olivias he wanted - as many of them as possible.
>
> (HD: 88-89)

The light-hearted episode is in ironic contrast to the guilt and unhappiness Olivia experiences when she finally conceives and eventually decides on an abortion, certain that it could not be 'a strapping blue-eyed baby boy'. In Ms. Rivers' case the relationship with Inder Lal and the pregnancy become the means to her experience of a 'completely new feeling - of rapture'. Yet aware of Inder Lal's inability to cope with fatherhood of the child she carries, the modern narrator does not allow euphoria to affect her plans and she does not tell him of her pregnancy. The decision 'I don't want to spoil anything' is a realistic assessment of his self-preoccupation but it hints of a future plan the narrator has in mind for herself and her baby. Olivia on the other hand tells the Nawab of her pregnancy on a moment of impulse, at a time when she feels the Nawab's problem with the British threaten their relationship (HD: 144-145) and when she herself is torn by conflicting loyalties.

N.S. Pradhan sees the focus of Heat and Dust as centred on the experiences and fate of the modern narrator, and maternity as the novel's central theme, one that allows her to make contact with India.(11) Whilst this is true the 'superiority' of the modern story over the original one lies in the feminist positives it offers of which motherhood, maternal care and love form an integral part. Ms. Rivers' enriching experiences from the reltionship she forms in Satipur portray female intelligence and potential. She does not allow situations or friends to thwart or confine her. The 'moral' life she leads in fact prepares her for a greater awareness of 'a great wish to be fulfilled', 'a terrible longing inside' (HD: 83). Her female strength and discipline is portrayed as very much a part of the Platonic quest for a higher knowledge and the greater possibility of merging spiritually with India.

Published in 1975, Heat and Dust was written at a time when the feminist movement in America was in full stride after its sixties beginning. As the work of a writer looking out to a new phase of life in America, perhaps wanting to end her Indian writing on a positive note, and influenced by the feminist movement, the text of Heat and Dust is woman-centred and although there is an ambivalent ending to the story of the modern quester, the positives it offers are quite feminist. It is in the more tragic and grander original story that the narrative hints of the derogation of women, seen in the few options left to the Anglo-Indian Olivia before and after her involvement with the Nawab. More importantly, the text confirms feminism's imperative that women resist the social and psychological derogation they are subjected to (Sucher 1989: 9).

Ms. Rivers is the modern woman of the seventies, independent, less reliant on men and more tuned into women. This latter point involves her in fulfilling, nurturing relationships (rarely portrayed in the Indian novels except in A Backward Place) which allow her 'to merge' in with the Indian landscape. It also makes her tolerant and unafraid of taboos and

restrictions of Indian life and generally prepares her for leaving the heat and dust of the lowlands with the desire to experience some kind of religious fulfilment. Both the modern narrator and Olivia share a restlessness of spirit that compels the one to undertake a journey of discovery and the other into a forbidden love affair. Olivia suffers not only the fate of those who break the rigid rules and taboos of Anglo-India but of the woman who having made her choices finds further limitations: she is not accorded the status of second wife of a Muslim prince and remains the Nawab's 'other woman', a Westerner and only his mistress. Although in a strange way she does begin to belong to India - 'she had become as private a topic to [the Nawab] as the Begum' - the text is significantly silent on whether Olivia is happy or not.

An early journal entry in the book reminds us of the changes the narrator has gone through:

> I myself am no longer the same. India changes people, and I have been no exception.
>
> (HD: 2)

Eiron self-awareness and resilience combine with sustaining nurturing relationships with women to make Ms. Rivers' quest a more positive one than her stepgrandmother's. The 'relationship' between Ms. Rivers and Olivia is symbiotic. The older woman motivates the modern narrator to the act of writing that is both creative and of practical value for it gives shape and inspires the narrator's personal hopes. The modern narrator in her turn keeps alive the older woman's memory and by following her story becomes the child Olivia could not have. The way the narrator plans for her own motherhood shows a conscious use of the older woman's story for her own ends but it is also an act of love towards Olivia, a kind of absolution for her less fortunate counterpart. The ability of the modern narrator not only to relive Olivia's story but to shape her own may be seen in the presentation of the parallel episodes when the two sets of

lovers meet at the Baba Firdaus fertility shrine. The text presents the contemporary couple's visit before the historically earlier Olivia-Nawab visit. Details of actions and words are echoed. These echoes suggest the narrator is indeed shaping her life on past events but the positioning of her own account *before* Olivia's suggests she is capable of making adjustments to Olivia's story, and that in doing so she benefits and constructs a more positive story for herself. The narrative supports this in showing how she controls the situation - 'it was my idea'; 'now I wanted him to be interested in my wishes'; 'I did have a desire ... to get close to him ... I laid my hand on his' (HD: 126-127). She initiates the sexual union with Inder Lal imposing her own pattern on Olivia's submission to the Nawab's sexual overtures at the same place before. It is a logical end to the narrator's first visit to the shrine with her women friends when the narrative reveals that she is already working out her own story. On being teased about what she has prayed for at the shrine, the narrator writes:

> I said they had brought me to the wrong shrine - first they should have taken me to one where not babies but a husband was to be got. More laughter - but really they were being serious (it was a very serious subject), *and perhaps I too had thoughts other than usual.* (My italics).
>
> (HD: 67)

From Maji, the holy woman, the narrator gains insight into the strength of the holy woman's religious piety in the way the old woman 'like some mythological figure', 'a supernatural figure with supernatural powers' makes sure she sees her pregnancy through (HD: 113). It is Maji's compassion and love that make Ms. Rivers forget her own fears of infection and disease to stay with the dying beggar woman Leelavati. Like a mother, the narrator watches over Leelavati whose 'toothless mouth opened with the same bliss of recognition as a baby's' (HD: 114). The same fearlessness and kind concern mark her care of Chid and a neglected old man at the hospital (HD: 157). In gaining greater compassion, wisdom

and spiritual hunger from Maji, Ms. Rivers is not only like the Platonic seeker of Beauty, but also like the Hindu seeker looking ahead to the final and fourth stage of life, that of *saanyasa* or renunciation.

In this stage of life a break is made from all worldly ties and full attention is given to attaining *moksha* or release (Organ 1974: 203). As we follow Ms. Rivers' story we see that the experiences and qualities that equip her as modern Platonic lover and seeker, also place her in readiness to strive for renunciation and the goal of *moksha*. Beneficial and harmonious relationships with Indians accelerate the process of merging with and acceptance of India and a learning from what India has to offer. From Inder Lal's family and the close knit relations with their neighbours and friends Ms. Rivers learns the meaning of togetherness and belonging:

> I lie awake for hours: with happiness, actually. I have never known such a sense of communion. Lying like this under the open sky there is a feeling of being immersed in space - though not in empty space, for there are all these people sleeping all around me, the whole town and I am part of it. How different from my often very lonely room in London with only my own walls to look at and my books to read.
>
> (HD: 52)

Female friendships help in Ms. Rivers' settling in in Satipur and in Inder Lal's mother and her band of widowed friends the narrator derives a picture of vibrant, independent womanhood,their zest for life in no way detracting from their religious piety (HD: 54). As mentioned earlier the friendship with Maji is very important. From her she gains insight into the rewards of *samadhi*, of feeling whole, recharged and eager for the joys of pilgrimages. In a parallel to Olivia's abortion scene, Ms. Rivers writes how Maji, instead of 'taking away' makes her feel as though she is 'transmitting something to me' giving her a 'completely new feeling - of rapture' (HD: 165). In a sense Ms. Rivers undergoes, in an abbreviated form, all three *asramas* to prepare her for the fourth stage. She is the student of her stepgrandmother's story and of India; then she is the

householder living alone but sharing the life of the Inder Lal family and setting up a relationship with Inder Lal. In the austere life-style she leads (HD: 6-7), looking after Chid and in moving away from Satipur, Inder Lal and friends she passes through the *vanaprasthya* period of gradual releasing of attachments to worldly life as preparation for the *saanyasa* period when having shaped her story she will still remain nameless, subject now to a different kind of anonymity in the *saanyasi's* renunciation.

In a real sense, Ms. Rivers' days in Satipur exemplify two important ideals of the devout Hindu: to engage in the business of duty and life and at the same time to follow closely the ideal of detachment, of action without concern for the fruits of action. Unlike Olivia cocooned first in her home, the Nawab's palace, then her mountain refuge, Ms. Rivers sallies forth and merges with the landscape in a series of positive actions and relationships that rise above personal considerations of gain and loss. These include the emptying of the contents of a sick old man's bed pan and bringing on herself the taint of pollution and the epiphanic, moving vigil with Maji over the dying beggerwoman Leelavati as the beauty of the Indian sunset reveals itself (HD: 114-115). It is a scene that captures vividly Maji and Leelavati's devout acceptance of an imperfect fate, India's enhancing, refining influence on the narrator and encapsulates Ruth Jhabvala's acceptance of her own imperfect fate and a certain degree of reconciliation with India in her last Indian novel.

With her good sense and foresight, the eiron-narrator serves to highlight Olivia's victim position and the dark story of her passion for the Nawab.(12) The more positive modern story does not detract from the novel's darkly ironic portrayal of human aspiration and weaknesses because it is consistently set against the darker original episodes and actions that make up Olivia's story. The sense of suffering being 'evitable'and 'superfluous', of human aspiration constantly whittled by irony is seen in

the way there is a narrative twist towards the end of the novel. It is here that Ms. Rivers becomes not just the instrument or agent of Jhabvala's ironic view of life but the subject of the ironic view itself. As the story approaches its end and we rejoice in the modern narrator's ability to rise above that of her older counterpart's, the eiron-narrator's lucidity and objectivity appear threatened by her heightened feelings for and merging with India. The Indian doctor's comment that only 'Indians are fit to live here' elicits an emotional outburst from Ms. Rivers:

> Do the doctor's strictures apply to the European soul as well as our bodies? I don't want to admit it; I don't want it to be so.
>
> (HD: 159)

Even in her detached handling of Major Minnies' warning in his monograph, Ms. Rivers breaks off to comment on his short-sightedness and lack of empathy:

> He who loved India so much, knew her so well, chose to spend the end of his days here!
>
> (HD: 171)

The reader fears Ms. Rivers may succumb like the Major's example of the unwary European, to 'an excess of feeling' and no longer be able to remain 'standing' and 'defiant'. There is an ominous hint of Ms. Rivers' emotional instability in the way the narrative shifts between euphoria over what Ms. Rivers imagines the 'vision' to be and her description of the mists of the valley. In the first case there is an exaggeration uncharacteristic of the normally restrained narrator:

> I imagine mountain peaks higher than any I've ever dreamed of; the snow on them is also whiter than all other snow - so white it is luminous and shines against a sky which is of a deeper blue than any yet known to me.
>
> (HD: 180)

The description of the valley mists, the air drenched with moisture, the helplessness of birds unable to fly and to trees waving like sea-weeds suggest images of drowning and powerlessness so that there is something more than choice implied when the narrator says 'I think it will be a long time before I go down again'. The narrative hints of a loss of will and even of danger. The novel stops short just as Ms. Rivers begins the next stage of her quest, leaving an ambivalence as to the changed state of mind, one, which she appears to hint at in the last sentence:

> I don't know yet how long I shall stay. In any case, it will have to be some time because of my condition which will make it more and more difficult to get down again, even if I should want to.
>
> (HD: 181)

The word 'condition' refers to her pregnancy as well as a changed state of mind. The Indian holy men who once seemed to her 'a sturdy set of rascals ... heavily drugged ... with shrewd and greedy faces' (HD: 63-64), are now swamis 'much respected in the town .... completely dedicated to studying the philosophy of those ancient writings' (HD: 181). The last words 'even if I should want to' echoes Olivia's helplessness when the Nawab holds on to her hand on the day they visit Baba Findaus' shrine (HD: 137). Inevitably the reader links Ms. Rivers to the host of associations and parallels Jhabvala has carefully built up. Warning signals posed all along the narrative suddenly become significant at the point where the modern narrator seems set to create a different story for herself. We are alerted to the dangers ahead for Ms. Rivers. Her new opinion of the swamis in whom she will place her faith, may be wrong. There is the possibility that her identity will be submerged by India and that the fate of an Evie or Lee of <u>New Dominion</u>, or of Chid, or the dysentry-racked seekers of Universal Love, awaits her. We are reminded of the bizarre groups of Westerners who stayed on in India 'of their own free will' - anonymous, alienated individuals like the murdered Englishman who dressed

up as an Afghan horse-dealer and the ghostlike figure of the woman missionary who warns Ms. Rivers that 'nothing human means anything here' (HD: 7). Ritu, like her older counterpart Sandy, the Nawab's wife, is mentally sick. There is the possibility of Ms. Rivers' quest becoming a nightmare of self-deception not unlike the isolation and suffering (and perhaps even madness) of Olivia's last years. Before the novel ends the narrator tells us 'I keep looking up all the time, but everything remains hidden' (HD: 180). It is a fitting comment on the uncertainties of her future.

The two stories unite at the novel's conclusion in an ending that is ambiguous, open-ended and perfectly characteristic of Jhabvala's work. Olivia's rare uncommunicative letters to Marie after the elopement, contacts with the outside world that eventually end, imply either a newly-discovered serenity from the vision that 'suffused her soul' or a suffering beyond articulation. In the same way, the narrator's search for spiritual fulfilment in the mountains is uncertain. As a daughter of the Rivers family, in the tradition of hardy, reliable women like Great Aunt Beth and Grandmother Jessie there is always the possibility that the right steps will be taken not to go too far into 'the other dimension', maintaining all that is best of the Platonic lover of wisdom and the Hindu seeker of liberation. On the other hand, it is a changed Ms. Rivers who proposes to journey upwards, vulnerable because she has perhaps lost the 'virile, measured European feeling' necessary for survival in India. The story shows us two women who 'stay' in India; the way they 'endure' is left uncertain. At the end of the novel, the reader, like the portrayal of the two protagonists hovers between faith in Forster-like trusting of the 'heart', and that of the need for the restraining influence of the 'head'. The modern narrator and Olivia in her later years are either victims of India or rare examples of those whose heart and mind are one in their merging with India.(13)

The ambivalent treatment of the modern narrator's quest in the latter part of the novel, even as she is used to highlight the destructive nature of the Olivia-Nawab love affair, is part of the dark ironic view of life Heat and Dust portrays. As a final novel on India, Heat and Dust rewrites its creator's diverse and often conflicting feelings about the country and the experiences it can offer the Westerner. It offers the possibility of physical and spiritual regeneration and the reality of misery, suffering and confusion that characterize fourth phase irony. As dedicated seeker or as lapsed eiron, the modern narrator's story achieves the same result. What is portrayed is a world of very human protagonist-seekers so deficient in the knowledge of human limitations.

CHAPTER SIX

THE COMIC IRONY OF IN SEARCH OF LOVE AND BEAUTY

Introduction to the Western Novels

In Search of Love and Beauty and Three Continents are products of Jhabvala's new life in America to which she emigrated in 1975 after a residence of twenty-five years in India. In Search of Love and Beauty (1983) was published seven years after the last 'Indian' novel Heat and Dust and the move to America; Three Continents (1987) four years later. The novels share the thematic concern of the later Indian novels, the difficult, often hopeless quest for love and fulfilment. Instead of the foreign questers in search of fulfilment through Indian spirituality, as in A New Dominion and Heat and Dust, the focus is on a Western setting and European and American seekers. The action of the two novels particularly Three Continents, follows a wide span of characters around America, Europe (represented by England) and India as they seek love and beauty in a satisfying life-style and/or life-partner. In In Search of Love and Beauty, Leo Kellerman is the charismatic guru who ministers to the emotional and physical needs of (predominantly) female seekers aided by a philosophy drawn, among other sources, from Hindu Tantrism. In Three Continents the American twins, Michael and Harriet Wishwell, seek meaning to their lives by putting their faith, love (and money) in Crishi and the Fourth World Movement which he manages for the leader, the Indian Rawul. These last two novels may be seen as literary expressions of the wish Jhabvala expresses in an interview:

> Q Is there one thing you might just like to do which you have not done before?
>
> A Something I would like to do is combine my three backgrounds: my European background because it was continental; and then I had an English education. Then I had a 25-year immersion into India and now I am beginning an immersion into America. So if I can bring all these elements together, well, that's just fine by me because I don't think there are all that many people who have had just such a varied life as I.

(Mooney 1977: 48B)

Jhabvala speaks of the 'neurotic' residents of New York, their blind commitment to 'success ethics', their materialism and 'terrible fear of showing their desperate loneliness ...' (Porter 1978: 12). This pervasive fear of loneliness is seen in the feverish quests of Jhabvala's later protagonists who engage in the unending, inevitably painful pursuit of love and acceptance. The quest theme, combined with the guru theme of the later Indian novels, provides Jhabvala with an excellent focus to satirize the behaviour and conventions of twentieth century America. Instead of a mesmerizing swami figure in Delhi or Benares, there are avatars of shady gurus and gods: a German one in In Search of Love and Beauty and an Indian in Three Continents. Jhabvala's ironic eye and feeling for social nuance portray the isolation and vulnerability even amidst the aggressive individualism, selfishness and success that characterize her protagonists' efforts.

In Search of Love and Beauty is the story of three generations of the Sonnenblick family: Louise and Bruno, German refugees to New York in the 1930s; Marietta their daughter and her children, Mark from her short marriage to Tim, and Natasha her adopted daughter. Their separate quests and that of the other protagonists, like the young Americans Stephanie and Jeff, Louise's childhood friend Regi, are related in various ways and degrees of love and contempt for the charismatic figure of Leo Kellerman, himself a refugee. Leo and his commune at the Academy of Potential Development, has its counterpart in the Fourth World Movement (later changed to International Transcendentalism) in The Three Continents, and the ruthless, enigmatic Crishi the real power behind the Rawul, the spiritual leader of the Movement. The second story focuses more directly on the novel's two young protagonists , the twins, in their search for 'something ... better' from the lonely if affluent life they have led. Presented in first-person narrative by the female twin Harriet, Three

Continents traces the twins' involvement with Crishi from the time the members of the Rawul's party, his consort Renee, adopted son Crishi, workers and followers, settle into 'Propinquity', the Wishwell family home, to the expansion of the movement in London and the final move to Dhoka, in India, the Rawul's birthplace.

The two novels reflect Jhabvala's discovery of America, to her 'the most European continent' where the civilization of Europe has somehow crystallized; after 1975 it was the place to be 'if I was going to go on writing' (Shapiro 1987: 3). The novels constitute the refugee - writer's search 'for a milieu, a home to be integrated into' (Rubin 1987: 10). Jhabvala, the quintessential foreigner and perpetual outsider repeats the process of milieu-building which occurred when she was uprooted from England at twenty-four to accompany her husband to India. The process of milieu-building is however simultaneous with a cold, dispassionate exposure of modern Americans' self-indulgent, frantic search for mass-produced, instant love.

Both novels expand on the theme of the vulnerability of Western female seekers to shady guru figures by portraying exploitation of the idealistic by large, well-run seemingly legitimate organizations headed by charismatic leaders. The makeshift *ashrams* in isolated dust-bowls, movements held together by mesmerizing leaders who gather loving followers and vast donations (particularly from rich American widows) in her Indian fiction are amalgamated and transformed to Leo Kellerman's Academy of Potential Development, a successful movement with centres all over America, and in Three Continents, the international Fourth World with its business interests, publicity campaigns and carefully structured staff. The sixties and seventies (Jhabvala's most productive writing period) proliferated with new religions, deviant sects and cults, quasi-religious human development movements, occult organizations and aesthetic associations. They arose out of the frustration, alienation and anonymity

of Western urban life and the political and social tensions of American life then.[1] The last two novels present marginal lives exposed to the hype on self-development and happiness that is so typical a feature of contemporary America. Leo's Academy is drawn from the popular non-religious human development, self-help organizations with syncretic doctrines that blend pragmatic self-help, popular psychology and self-awareness techniques. The Fourth Movement is a composite picture of the many well-financed, profit-making social reform movements often with elements of Eastern religion in their ideology.

If the last two Indian novels depict a compassionate understanding of the Westerners' quest for fulfilment in India in the characters of Raymond, Miss Charlotte, Ms. Rivers and the plight of the seekers at the hands of predatory Indians, In Search of Love and Beauty, the product of seven years stay in America paints a less sympathetic picture of Westerners. The gradual development of perspective in the Indian novels from ironic comedy, to satiric/comic irony and to the darker ironies of the later phase, is accelerated in the Western novels. Within two novels Jhabvala moves swiftly from the sharply satiric In Search of Love and Beauty to the study of extreme exploitation in Three Continents - a move from second-phase irony to the descending darker phase of fifth-phase irony.

The important shifts in ironic stance are partly dictated by the change in milieu but more importantly by the pessimism and ennui of yet another move to a new country, and another phase as 'outsider'. Thus despite the move to a place that evokes happy memories of early childhood in Germany (Weinraub 1983: 112) the ironic viewpoint intensifies. The previous disillusionment over the poverty, hypocrisies and corruption of Indian life is exchanged for that of a disenchantment over the delusion and cruelties of people with at least the material benefits of life.

As Jhabvala's first Western novel, In Search of Love and Beauty, does capture the variety and zest for love and life of the early Indian domestic novels. It spans in fact, a wider area in time and location portraying the background of its immigrant protagonists in Germany in the 1920s and the assimilation of their fellow refugees and younger additions to the Sonnenblick family within the contemporary American milieu. There is mention of Leo's travels to set up Academy branches as far away as Colorado; Marietta marries into an American family descended from Scottish and European ancestors who live out in the country.

Yet there is a clear difference between In Search of Love and Beauty and the corresponding Indian early-phase ironies, Esmond in India, Get Ready for Battle and Backward Place, in that there is less humour in the Western novel. There are plenty of follies and flaws but they neither amuse nor endear as happens with the Indian characters. The compassion and understanding that underlie the earlier novels is missing. Instead there is a distancing from the protagonists, achieved mainly through the narrative and the structuring of the novel.

The novel also marks the shift to a philosophical framework of Western ideas in the last two works. Muted references to Platonic ideas in A New Dominion and Heat and Dust find fuller expression in these Western novels particularly in In Search of Love and Beauty where the title signals a concern with Plato's ideas on Eros, and the subjection of the human soul to the conflicting pulls of profane and spiritual love. Allusions to classical mythology accentuate the novel's status as beginning a new Western phase. Characters and incidents are played out against the ideals of the true Platonic seeker of Beauty and Wisdom and of divine Greek figures. Mark, for all his commitment to Love, Youth and Beauty never quite rises above beauty of the body. In the disappointments of the 'tireless pursuit of love', 'beauty of the soul' recedes to become a faraway ideal. Leo, former Adonis and self-styled philosopher, is a

comic/ironic parallel of Socrates and his thoughts on the role of Love in the search for Wisdom. For Three Continents too, a Platonic framework provides a similar coherent and substantive force for Jhabvala's irony. Certain signals emphasize a framework broader than the emphasis on Plato's The Symposium. In her last novel, differences between the twins - Michael's ascetic fairness and Harriet's dark looks and passion for Crishi - alert us to the use of Plato's allegory of the human soul as charioteer in Phaedrus, as part of the novel's framework. The growing rift between the twins, a rift brought about by differences of ideals and gender, parallels the differing pulls the human soul is subjected to in the Phaedrus.

In Search of Love and Beauty looks at the delusions and weaknesses of its protagonists though the ideals and philosophies and development theories they commit themselves to. In Jhabvala's earlier works satire is directed at deluded alazons who adopt, adapt and abuse ideals to suit their purpose. In In Search of Love and Beauty the emphasis is predominantly on the alazon's undiminished faith in these concepts and ideals and how these sets of standards are ultimately inadequate as complete aids to living in relation to the complexity of human nature and human relationships.

As a work that looks at concepts ironically, In Search of Love and Beauty shows aspects of Frye's second-phase irony. In first-phase irony satire is directed against the 'unconventional' (the alazons) who unlike the eirons do not have a common-sense way of handling conventions (AC: 229). In second-phase irony, the sources and values of conventions themselves are objects of ridicule (AC: 29). The simplest form of second-phase satire is the picaresque novel, 'the story of the successful rogue who ... makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard' (AC: 229). Thus the irony of In Search of Love and Beauty arises from the 'collision between a selection of standards from

experience and the feeling that experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it' (AC: 229). It focuses on Leo Kellerman, the character-philosopher and the 'successful rogue', as one whose theories 'abstract from life', leaving out data he considers 'inconvenient'. At the end of the novel he himself is shown to have sadly underestimated the simple human need to love and be loved as he drives wildly in the mist looking for the young girl, Stephanie. Although there is little that is comic in In Search of Love and Beauty what there is is associated mainly with Leo Kellerman as the ironic parallel of the hero of the corresponding phase comedy who runs away to a more congenial society without transforming his own (AC: 229). In Leo's case his theories and programmes ultimately bring little change thus showing he offers no real positive standards; neither does he apparently achieve a better society for himself as he disappears into the mist, possibly to his death.

In satirising Leo's theories, the central one being the theory of the Point when the highest human experiences on the physical and spiritual merge, and focusing irony on Marietta's concern about Platonic 'Ideas' and Mark's search for beauty of form in homosexual lovers, the Platonic philosophy on love provides the framework for In Search of Love and Beauty as the title so clearly signals. As a novel that shows aspects of second-phase irony in which concepts and conventions are ironically viewed, these Platonic ideas themselves come under scrutiny. Just as in A New Dominion the novel poses dark questions about *Krishna-bhakti* being merely a cover for sexuality, so also this novel teases us with questions about Platonic transcendence and sublimation of the sensual for the spiritual. The profane relationships, and in a few cases the fulfilment they offer, appear to suggest that perhaps this is all there is to human love and if so that for a very few it is not such a bad thing after all.

If conventions, abstractions and set standards for behaviour come under ironic scrutiny in In Search of Love and Beauty, Jhabvala's second

Western novel suggests a world where ideals and standards matter little except when they are utilized for personal gain and material exploitation. Michael Wishwell's knowledge of the various philosophies of the world fails to equip him to deal with the choices he and Harrriet make; they fall victim to Crishi in their search for some vague notion of a Platonic Good. It is Jhabvala's story of the quest for fulfilment and meaning at its darkest and most hopeless, the muted Platonic references an indication of an almost total loss or invalidity of values and ideals. In Search of Love and Beauty however manages to suggest from the variety of profane relationships glimmerings of tolerance, affection and hope. The Three Continents concentrates on the experience of two lonely young people in a world devoid of caring. Neither is there variety of character and relationship to enliven the novel which shows aspects of Frye's fifth-phase irony in its emphasis not so much on showing the humanity of the deluded (as in fourth phase irony) but an objective, stoical account of corrupt, exploitative relationships and 'the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune', of 'experience with the point of epiphany closed up' (AC: 237). The dark pessimism of the novel is accentuated by a text that mirrors Harriet's misery and confusion even though we are told that the events recorded happened years ago, 'in another life'.

The expression 'in another life' suggests not just the passage of time but of a world of 'subhuman and superhuman' people (an expression, we are told by Harriet, used by many to describe Michael). Crishi, the expert manager, public relations person, businessman and lover looms large over the subhuman victims who appear to have the most amazing reserves of acceptance, faith and love. Crishi is the all-powerful superhuman, who manipulates everyone including the Rawul.

The Indian characters that people the early-phase ironies are solid, mainstream, ordinary people. Those of In Search of Love and Beauty are much more 'fringe' characters: eccentrics, outcasts, introverted lovers,

sexual deviants. Stephanie the Academy member Leo falls in love with is 'straight' and she survives by keeping alive a healthy detachment from the others. All this casts some doubt on whether a world of normal people exists at all and suggests, with all the frenetic search for belonging, a kind of 'sexual nuthouse' (John Osborne quoted in Hassan 1961: 75).

Apart from the characters, it is as stated earlier, the style and form of In Search of Love and Beauty that make it a darker early-phase irony. Detachment and distance is created by a time-frame that is broken up in a narrative that moves backwards and forwards between Germany of the 1920s and New York of the 1980s to include flashback within flashback. The effect of these constant shifts in time carefully positioned for contrast and effect is to emphasize not only the gulf that exists between the protagonists' dreams and their errors but the continuing inability to acquire experience and understanding from time. There is an omniscient narrative voice that alternates between wry comments or pointed attack on delusions and self-love; distancing is also created with the narrative consisting of externalizations of thoughts of flawed onlookers. One of them is Natasha an ingenue figure who in her goodness is a gauge for the follies of the others. Yet her innocence, and inexperience and the suggestion that mentally she is deficient make her an inadequate commentator. In making Natasha herself 'exposed as well as exposing', a feature of the ingenue in eighteenth century works (Muecke 1969: 92), the text dissembles for its stand towards the alazon's world is ambiguous. Sometimes it is critical of the absurdities (when Natasha's comments are portrayed as valid) and at other times it condones the excesses (when Natasha appears to be inadequate and ineffectual).

The ironies of narrative and form of In Search of Love and Beauty are developed in Three Continents to the central narrative strategy of yet another innocent, the rich heiress Harriet Wishwell. She is the flawed narrator whose text is so unreliable and deliberately ambivalent that it

images both the fractured personality of Harriet as well as the impression of human action as being either deluded and meaningless or duplicitous and demonic:

> Irony descends from the low-mimetic: it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it.
>
> (AC: 42)

In In Search of Love and Beauty, Leo and Louise are ironic, comic inversions of archetypal gods and deities; the fabulous adventures of these larger-than-life characters on the whole parody the adventures of romance figures. In the end, the protagonists are shown to have brought back no 'precious objects' from their quest (AC: 193). Frye's observations are particularly relevant to Three Continents where the tone darkens and we see mythical patterns ... suggestive of the demonic (AC: 140). In the sacrificial ritual of the Wishwell twins, we see the archetypal theme of sparagmos, the absence of heroism, and its imagery, mutilation and tearing apart in Michael's death, the separation of the twins and other descriptive details (AC: 148; 222). The movement towards myth in the two Western novels is part of a larger development from low mimetic to myth of Jhabvala's novels as a whole. Her writing begins with the ironic comedies and early ironies centred round domestic conflict of families in Delhi. The last two Indian novels prior to the move to America are later phase ironies which parody the quest theme of romance (AC: 223, 228). Similar irony is directed at romance's quest theme in the two Western novels with Three Continents portraying a darker view of this, corresponding to the pessimism of a A New Dominion. The titles of the novels are signals to the concern with 'marvellous quests': what the stories portray are adventures which are in effect 'studies of lost direction and lack of knowledge' (AC: 222). Quests and adventures, characters with strong symbolic overtones, submission to gods and demons,

omens and portents, sacrificial deaths of victims and demonic imagery are ironic aspects not only of the quest theme but also point to the myth-like quality of Three Continents.

A part of this movement from realism to myth is seen in the portrayal of India. In the early ironic comedies and comic ironies the setting is built up of details. Houses, streets and roads, buildings and landmarks lend a solidity and authenticity to Jhabvala's Delhi. There is a sense of continuity in the overall idea of Delhi/India in the references to specific landmarks and descriptive details like Uma's cosy if untended family home in Esmond in India or the streets and lanes of less affluent Delhi. Briefly in the comedies, and more obviously in the ironies, there is highlighted the sense of a timeless, undying India full of vigour and refinement, yet beset by poverty and suffering. In the last two Indian novels and with the onset of mythic aspects to the ironic fiction India takes on symbolic significance, a land of heat and dust, alluring yet with dangers for the Westerner.

India 'recedes' from the last two Western novels in two ways. In In Search of Love and Beauty the backward glance at India is restricted to brief references to it in connection with Marietta's visits. Apart from her happy but short-lived Indian experience with Ahmad, her sarod-playing lover, and Sujata the passionate Indian woman who lives for love, our final image of India is the fear and revulsion it generates in Marietta. In Three Continents India recedes in the sense that it is associated with the novel's mythic overtones and becomes the setting for the final destruction of the Wishwell twins by Crishi. It is a dark, mysterious place suggestive of violence and as such takes on all the aspects of India featured in earlier Anglo-Indian romances (Rubin 1987: 71-72).

The distancing of India in these two Western novels is accompanied with a marked reduction in the use of Hindu philosophical thought for ironic effect. In In Search of Love and Beauty, the erotic hold Leo has

over the women echoes the erotic/spiritual hold of the Indian *swamis* over the women in Heat and Dust and in many of Jhabvala's short stories. In Three Continents there are again echoes of this although here as in the earlier novel the women are not religiously orientated as those of A New Dominion and Ms. Rivers of Heat and Dust. Nevertheless, with India as setting for the third part of Three Continents, a central character whose name is a corruption of Krishna and with whom both the twins are in love, there are allusions to Hindu thought. The main reference is the idea of '*neti, neti*', the principle of negativity used to describe the undescribable - *Brahman* (Organ 1974: 256-257). The twins' favourite word for anything phoney or unacceptable is 'neti' and the idea of 'inadequate, inadequate' ironically accentuates the little information we have of Crishi's past, Harriet's future and the disturbing ambivalence of a text in which the narrator Harriet is unable to state clearly her present thoughts and feelings about Crishi.

In Search of Love and Beauty (1983)

The story is in three parts; the first two consist of carefully balanced episodes that shift back and forth between Louise's childhood and adolescence in the 1920s in a small town in Germany, the refugees' early years in America and accounts of the lives of the second and third-generation Sonnenblick off-spring.(2) Some of the important events include Leo Kellerman's introduction to the 'bored and stranded' society of rich German refugees, the Louise-Leo affair, Leo's rise to fame and continued success even in his old age, Mark's homosexual life and success in real estate. The third part deals mainly with the 1980s leading up to

Louise's death and the implied death of Leo and Natasha as he drives in the mist looking for his latest love, Stephanie. The whole account is presented in a narrative voice that is alternately detached, bemused or sharply ironic. The effect of the narrational stance that wryly records the relentless often hopeless quest for happiness that extends over a period of sixty years and the constant shifts in time, is to create for the reader a situation with conflicting effects. On the one hand there is a sense of looking down on protagonists caught in a permanent state of 'frustration' and 'absurdity' (AC: 34), of impulsive, thwarted lives on an unending search for happiness; on the other hand, the interplay of focus on the different questers and their brief triumphs evoke a grudging sense of admiration for the undiminished search for love and self-definition.

Frye writes:

> [Hence] satire is irony which is structurally close to the comic: the struggles of two societies, one normal and the other absurd, is reflected in its double focus of morality and fantasy.
>
> (AC: 224)

In <u>In Search of Love and Beauty</u> this 'struggle' takes the form of two approaches to life: that of the alazons the 'deceived and deceiving, and that of the eirons, the pragmatic, self-deprecating protagonist of ironic fiction. The 'normal' world of Louise, Stephanie, Jeff and Natasha is set against the 'fantasy' that surrounds the world of Leo, Mark, Marietta, Regi and the seekers at the Academy. The eirons provide 'the implicit moral standard' against which 'the grotesque and absurd are measured' (AC: 223). The love[5] that Louise, Natasha, Stephanie and Jeff show are far from perfect but are alternatives to that of the alazons. They are different kinds of lovers but they share the common characteristic of being sustaining spontaneous relationships that are, to some extent, unselfish, non-destructive and enhancing. The lovemaking of Stephanie and Jeff, the

young lovers, happens in neutral territory, the natural surroundings of the Academy grounds away from the Academy and its members: they are 'natural' lovers among the flowers and 'passionate insects'. Like the eirons of first-phase irony who sometimes need to make journeys of survival out of the humorous society, Stephanie and Jeff begin a new life elsewhere. They leave the world of the alazon lovers, those self-conscious seekers driven by ideas, ideals, conventions and philosophers of the times.

The title 'In Search of Love and Beauty' signals the novel as a philosophical irony, an ironic enquiry on love. It clearly echoes the central speech of The Symposium, Plato's famous dramatic dialogue on Love set at a dinner party where Socrates and his friends each deliver an encomium to Love. This central speech is Socrates' on the true lover's search for absolute Beauty or Good by working his way upwards from the sensible world and worship of physical beauty (SYM: 92-95). Other Platonic allusions together with characters and situations that suggest ironic parallels to the Platonic seeker and the quest for Love and Beauty build up a framework that is pervasive and eminently suitable for a novel that shows aspects of Frye's second-phase irony. This is a 'more intellectualized satire' whose 'central theme is the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain (AC: 230). Like the guests at Agathon's party in The Symposium, the alazon-lovers of In Search of Love and Beauty have their own ideas and ideals about the search for Love. These are echoes of Platonic ideals. Satire in In Search of Love and Beauty is thus directed at the inadequacy of these philosophies and at the inability to live up to their ideals.

The focus of the quest for fulfilment as well as of the novel's irony is Leo Kellerman and the philosophical thoughts, theories, programmes and activities he draws up to facilitate personal wholeness,

love and happiness for his disciples and himself(3). He is the philosopher who makes abstractions from life, 'leaving out inconvenient data' (AC: 229). He is also the typical figure of 'the successful rogue' of second-phase satire, the counterpart to second-phase comedy's hero who runs away to a more congenial society without transforming his own. Leo makes 'conventional society look foolish' by offering its members emotional and psychological panaceas which leave the seeker even more confused and emotionally vulnerable than they were before. Leo's influence is however not restricted to the Academy for in one way or another he touches the lives of most of the other protagonists. Thus even as irony is directed at the other protagonists and the 'set of standards' they devise or acquire for themselves, Leo and his philosophy, particularly his theory of The Point (when the highest experience on the physical and spiritual level intersect) serve as reminders of the over-simplification of theories and dogmas and the complexity of the life they are supposed to explain.

Leo has 'theories about everything' (IS: 31). As he exploits, bullies, manipulates his followers towards being more 'self-centred' and 'self-absorbed', prerequisites to 'self-development, progress, even creation' (IS: 20), they become even more uncertain, isolated and lonely. The narrative picks up Leo's grandiose manner of speaking and the jargon of the trade in describing one of Leo's aims:

> At that time his principal aim was to develop an awareness of three-dimensional living in a civilization which was hopelessly crippled in all its responses.
>
> (IS: 31)

The empty claims of wanting to train initiates 'into a movement which was to be socially, psychologically, and - why not? - biologically revolutionary' and the actual benefits of the theatre group sessions, 'the psychological encounter group, [the] quasi-psychiatric practise, the study

of Eastern philosophies' may be seen in the fate of two of the disciples Shirley and Janet. Both have surrendered their 'personalities, or inner beings, or souls' to Leo (IS: 36). Their collective rewards for this are self-guilt, morbid depression, jealousy and a preoccupation with the past. Shirley's comment on her life is significant 'Nothing turns out the way you plan it, nothing, nothing, nothing ....' (IS: 115) and for Janet 'three-dimensional living' consists of self-hatred and a suspicion that Shirley uses her night-cream (IS: 138-139).

The classical references employed in descriptions of Leo blend well with the Platonic frame of reference. They suggest ironic mythic properties to the figure of the guru who is god-like to his Academy members. He is an 'Adonis', an 'Apollo'; his laugh is 'Olympian'. He has a 'hot line' right into his students' 'Souls or psyche' such that he can make sinners repent by bringing them to an awareness of their 'maladjustments' (IS: 114). Yet the 'beneficent deity', a combination of god and guru studiously avoids the one-to-one relationship of the guru and his disciple (IS: 129). The palatial house lent him by a grateful benefactor is grossly referred to as 'smelling of the five Ps' (IS: 11). The guru who professes to be able to guide damaged seekers to be more 'become' persons refers to his workshop sessions as 'garbage'. He is the 'goddam guru' who has to see to the welfare of his 'shithole students' (IS: 18). In his old age, even as he 'mellowed' to indulgent treatment of young and attractive followers, Leo's comment on his students is:

> The idiots .... If only they'd all go away and take their problems with them, instead of dumping it all on me. I'm sick of them.
>
> (IS: 172)

He is compared to yet another 'god', the 'Dionysian figure' of a drunk tramp who as Leo does, obtains money from Louise (IS: 16). It is on the

money and erotic/emotional devotion of his followers that Leo, like some modern Dionysius, enjoys the material good life.

Leo's grossness of attitude and language, aspects of his role as a kind of fallen, corrupt god is matched by his preoccupation with sex. There is grim truth in his joke that the women students are there to turn him on (IS: 115). Nothing pleases Leo more than a resisting woman like Marietta. Leo's image for both his sexual and his spiritual conquests is the same:

> It's no fun unless the fish resists; unless it struggles - flaps and fights and wriggles for its life until - yupp! you've got it: up in the air where you want it, dangling there, with all your hook, line and sinker inside it.
>
> (IS: 21)

Marietta's antipathy for him acts as both 'goad and amusement'. His sexual baiting of Marietta (IS: 21, 64) and eventual success (IS: 82) are but aspects of his preoccupation with sexual dominance. He tells Natasha of 'prodigal Nature' where there is 'one Louise after another - one Regi after another' and rejoices in the fact that 'in the end, at the top of the tree, there is the sweetest little hard little juiciest little apple' (IS: 174).

Leo's sexual nature is emphasized by the animal images he is associated with, imagery that serves to intensify further the ironic allusion to classical and mythological characters and qualities (IS: 5, 7, 14, 87). He is like a 'stranded whale', an 'exasperated whale' (IS: 11); a 'superannuated circus animal' (IS: 73); a 'great bear' when he lifts up his monk's robes to chase after a girl (IS: 104). To Marietta he is 'that dreadful fearful monster' (IS: 9). One of Leo's programmes is the physical expression classes designed to allow the follower to express his 'Passion' through his own experiences. Satire is directed at Leo's class, and the mildly sexual titillation afforded by acting out the 'Passions'. At the beginning the narrative voice mimics the nervous

excitement of the followers. Love and Wrath are comically and incongruously placed together with 'merely Irritability'. The ridiculous apeing of animals particularly of 'monkeys' and 'hyenas' is described in language with Biblical overtones:

> Leo would call on someone, anyone, at random - and how their hearts beat, for who would it be today? - to relate some personal experience in illustration of the Passion which was the topic of the day. One day it might be Jealousy, or Wrath, or merely Irritability, another Love .... at Regi's it was acted out .... they gave strenuous physical expression to the chosen Passion; not only ... as human beings but as animals too, so that, for instance, on the Day of Wrath there would be such roaring as of lions, such bellowing of bulls, chatterings of monkeys, shrieks of hyenas ....
>
> (IS: 36-37)

Leo's grossness and preoccupation with sex whilst providing some humour underlie the more serious effects Leo has on those associated with him. He brings misery to the Academy members, marital unfaithfulness for Louise, life-long sexual hang-ups for Marietta which start with her childhood encounter of Louise and Leo's lovemaking; the indirect effect of this is seen in Marietta's smothering love for Mark, and his homosexuality. His grossness of language and sexuality also provide the basis for a discussion of the highpoint of his philosophy, The Point.

The entire episode where Leo expounds his theory of The Point presents Leo as the ironic inversion of Socrates, and his gathering, a mockery of the elegance and exchange of learning that characterize Plato's dinner party. The episode is important not only for the conceptual irony of In Search of Love and Beauty but also for the fact that just as The Symposium offers pictures of Athenian social life so also here the episode offers images of American life. It shows the individualistic, dogged search for a happiness that is seen as a right to be worked at and it captures the loneliness at the heart of American life when seekers place their lives in the dubious guidance of Leo and his Academy.

In the description of the highpoint of Leo's quest for truth, The Point, the text displays second-phase irony's 'breaking up [of] the lumber of stereotypes ... crank theories ... oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement ... of society (AC: 233). Leo and his philosophy become ironic reversals of Socrates and the Socrates/Diotima speech on the role of Love or Eros in the achievement of knowledge of Truth and Beauty. The narrative captures Leo's speaking voice — its relaxed laid-back style, the casual non-intellectual stance of the guru/confidante. There is none of Socrates' dialectic of reasoning, rather the alazon's self-inflating pronouncements that something is so because he has said so. Socrates is the modest, self-deprecating eiron when he conducts a particular philosophical enquiry by the method of question and answer. He gradually brings about another's helplessness and admission that his existing views on the subject under discussion are mistaken (SYM: 73-74). Leo throws questions, promptly answers them himself allowing little opportunity for learning where Socrates would preface his questions or speech with preambles like 'Allow me also, Phaedrus, to ask Agathon a few small questions, so that I may obtain his agreement before I begin my speech'; 'Let us go a little further to make my meaning quite clear'; 'Take a firm grasp of this point then ...' (SYM: 74-76). Leo's philosophical sessions consist of questions and opinions like: 'What, no one knows?'; 'What have I done to deserve this bunch of dummies?'; 'Well, I must say. You're for the birds'; 'My God, any child knows that' (IS: 131).

The allusion to the Platonic quest for the sublime is implicit in Leo's preamble that he would like to ascend 'higher, as human beings are supposed to' (IS: 139). What Socrates says on the role of physical love as a stepping stone towards an awareness of spiritual beauty (SYM: 92) is reduced to Leo's 'orgasm', 'the highest human experience on the physical plane'. Leo's source, Socrates, is acknowledged in a brief, off-hand

manner befitting the liberties he has taken with it 'Yes, Socrates' (IS: 131). Plato's non-physical level of love, beginning with love of beauty of soul to moral beauty in general (SYM: 92-93) finds vulgarized expression as the orgasm of the 'spiritual - the, psychic - the you name it plane' (IS: 131). Leo's 'Point', when the two points of highest experience for both planes intersect, is the ironic parallel to Plato's 'beauty of knowledge' and eventually the 'vision of the Form of Beauty itself' (SYM: 94-95). Leo's description of The Point is in physical, sexual terms, far removed from the mystical, religious, spiritual, experience of the Platonic seeker's final ascent:

> Do you not see that in that region alone where he sees beauty with the faculty capable of seeing it, will he be able to bring forth not mere reflected images of goodness but true goodness, because he will be in contact not with a reflection but with the truth? And having brought forth and nurtured goodness he will have the privilege of being beloved of God, and becoming, if ever a man can, immortal himself.
>
> (SYM: 95)

When Leo states that since the orgasm of the soul is yet unknown ('We haven't got there yet') the implication is that the seekers must be content with 'the highest attainment' on the physical level: unsublimated profane love. Later, caught in the throes of love for Stephanie, Leo tells Natasha not to 'underestimate Nature' and again appears to be preoccupied with only part of the search for Love and Beauty:

> You can't reach anything higher without going through it - right through it - from top to bottom - through Louise's little dimples.
>
> (IS: 174)

In 'the game of higher evolution' that Leo conducts we find that the exploitative nature of both Leo and his Academy remains unchanged into the 80s. When the older Leo says 'see how prodigal nature is - one Louise after another ... and then in the end the sweetest little hard little

juiciest little apple' (a reference to Stephanie) he is little different from the early Leo who exploits the esoteric and sexual nature of the Hindu cult of Tantrism to authenticate his own Tantric period and 'some very physical experiments' of the period:

> He taught in his lectures that there were no ascending levels of being, and that each level had to be thoroughly explored and exploited before one was ready to rise to the next. In practise, what it came down to ... was that while one was on the level of the senses, one had to fulfil them to the brim....
>
> (IS: 76)

It is significant that Hindu thought in the novel - part of its backward glance at India - should consist of allusions to Tantric ideas. At its most widespread and insidious in influence Tantrism is sexual indulgence under the guise of religion (Chaudhri 1979: 249).(4) In Search of Love and Beauty portrays the Western version of the sexual self-indulgence that underlies so much of the quest for development, fulfilment and meaning. The fact that Leo himself and the questers are permanently caught at 'the level of the senses' being alternately exploited or themselves exploiting, with neither transcendence nor true happiness in sight indicate the futility of 'attempting to systematize or formulate a coherent scheme' of what they do or ought to do (AC: 229) in the face of the complexity and infinite variety of human nature and experiences.

Plato's Academy, the famous centre for philosophical studies and the basis for future universities finds an ironic corollary in Leo's Academy of Potential Development. Here, where either spiritual, emotional and sexual longing is called love, women worry about Leo's favour, the rooms assigned to them, the pilfering of organic night-cream and generally engage in alternate bouts of acrimony and self-abuse (IS: 20, 137). Ultimately the Academy (and Leo) impedes a true quest for love for the followers work 'terribly hard' at the ideal, to be 'self-absorbed', 'self-centred'. The song Leo repeatedly sings (IS: 129) is a denial of the ideals of mutual

caring and guidance of a mentor for his charges, of a guru for his students. The use of the word 'brother' ignores the predominantly female population at the Academy. Socrates' meticulous weaning out of truth and understanding from his students and fellow philosophers like Lycis, Phaedrus, Aristophanes, finds an ironic corollary in Leo's aggressively individualistic stand:

> I'll Don't fence me in. Don't pin me down.
> ^ flutter my wings, you flutter yours. Let's see
> who'll make it first, up to the sky.
> That's where I'm heading for: look out brother,
> I'm flying high.
>
> (IS: 129)

The song is an affirmation of Leo's 'ego', yet the Academy members' 'ego' they are informed by Leo, is a weakness that impedes the movement's progress. An ego-ridden victim ritually selected every year is subject, as the narrator ironically points out, to harsh treatment - Leo's disfavour and disappointment, a public recounting of 'psychological failings':

> 'You ruined it,' Leo said .... 'You ruined
> everyone's work, including mine.' He shrugged ... he wasn't
> angry he was resigned; he had expected nothing better.
> 'I don't blame you,' he said, 'I blame myself.
> Will I never learn?' he ruefully asked. 'People are what they
> are, I can't change the leopards' spots - no, not even I.'
>
> (IS: 61)

The alazon's self-deprecation, heavy with self-importance ironically exposes the undermining of confidence and the hopelessness of the women's quest for some authenticity. It is also the guru-philosopher's unconscious acknowledgement that 'abstractions from life are ultimately inadequate.

An episode that epitomizes the futility of the womens' trust in Leo and his theories occurs when one of the students, Shirley, leaves off conversing with Natasha in the attic room of the Academy to go down to the

garden. She joins in the revelry where Leo and the other members are dancing, each 'acting out his drive towards satisfaction':

> Shirley walked through the grass, looking for a partner, and bumped against Janet, another middle-aged woman, on the same mission. They danced with each other but it didn't matter, for each had her eyes shut and was doing a dance of her own.
>
> (IS: 117)

The opinion expressed in the narrative 'but it didn't matter' is ambiguous. It is perhaps an echo of the womens' thoughts, as each realizes she is dancing with a woman and not with Leo, or even another man; it may be taken also as an intrusive narrational voice that wants to emphasize the womens' easy surrender to any activity at the Academy. The final effect is to highlight the uselessness of the whole exercise of human development at the Academy, for already wrapped up in their own fears and inadequacies, life with Leo has only made the women even more self-absorbed, oblivious to others and unable to find a life-partner or a fulfilling life style. The scene is one of superficial conviviality set against the dark, sombre reality of the mansion where the thoughtful, equally self-absorbed Natasha is all alone in the attic bedroom. It is reminiscent of the ballroom scenes and the pervasive sense of loneliness presented in the film 'Roseland' (1977), a story written by Jhabvala for Merchant Ivory Productions.(5) Here she highlights the unusual partnerings of lonely men and women who seek companionship and a sense of belonging. Eric who appears in Part III of In Search of Love and Beauty is a later creation of the young men of 'Roseland' who befriend lonely ladies at New York's famous dance-hall. Eric's patient caring for Regi is a poignant reminder of the possibility of attaining a Point to life unaided by ready-made schemes for fulfilment such as those offered by Leo at the Academy.

Leo's passion for Stephanie provides examples of situational irony in the novel. Leo, the man who believes 'you can't reach anything higher'

without going through 'Louise's little dimples' is too old, fat and short of breath to achieve the highest experience at the physical level. Even this is explained as his successful resistance of 'the temptation of a young girl beside him' (IS: 56). He is the Platonic lover caught in his own humanity. The self-sufficient man who knows something of everything, and maintains his individuality and freedom (IS: 129) falls helplessly (and hopelessly) in love with Stephanie. In doing so he proves the existence of the 'infinite variety of what men do' and the amount of 'inconvenient data' that can get left out of philosophical abstractions of life (AC: 229). After years of experimenting with different life styles, Leo is 'human too', my father's son, just like everyone else', capable of being 'in love again' and subject to all the joy and pain of falling ironically for his most successful student for Stephanie attains the ideal of self-centredness that Leo promises his students. She develops confidence through association with Jeff and leaves Leo equipped with choice and options for the future. She opts for the natural, sexual satisfaction Jeff delivers and eventually like him leaves the complicated relationships and demands of life at the Academy. Thus Leo's star pupil has a hand in his death for at the end of the novel, we see Leo driving wildly, crying and mumbling incoherently for Stephanie. This is Leo's genuine act of love, the Platonic lover's 'divine madness' when he is out of himself for love of someone else. His death although implied rather than stated is simple by comparison with his flamboyant, deliberate life style but a natural and logical part of the complex inequalities and unexplained data of life. The tangible 'reality of the senses' (AC: 235) is set against Leo's sterile theories about a better life. Perhaps in death Leo's verbal concept of The Point, of the intersection of the physical and spiritual planes is achieved. The ending is however ambiguous and our final picture of Leo is that 'he looked and sounded crazy' (IS: 187). Our sense here of looking down on a scene of

'frustration' and 'absurdity' is reinforced by the description of Louise's death which follows the Leo scene.

The final visit to the Academy is a happy one for it echoes the happiness of Louise's first visit to the new Academy (IS: 13-14). However it is here that Louise falls, her death caused by her friend Regi, self-centred and cranky to the end. Louise's passing away 'with a pain so transporting' is ambivalent. Perhaps this is the Point on the spiritual level. It suggests the attainment of the Point with the convergence of the highest experience of the body and the soul. Perhaps it is transcendence for Louise at the point of death in terms of the only 'orgasm' possible for all human seekers, the sexual. What is also important to note is that for all Marietta's search for 'variety' and 'light' in her life she remains unaware of the possibilities of meaning in her mother's final cry:

> [Louise] cried out, though just once and not very loudly, and only Marietta heard her. 'I'm coming!' was what Marietta heard - as she had heard her mother exclaim once before, years and years ago when she had watched her and Leo from behind the screen. And Marietta wondered now as she had wondered then - what's she mean? Where's she coming? Where's she going?
>
> (IS: 188)

Marietta's puzzlement images the misery and hopelessness behind modern America's unceasing conflicting quest for connectedness and individual, personal fulfilment; even the benefits of lower Eros are not fully tapped.

The word 'satire' is supposed to come from '*satura*' or hash, and a kind of parody of form seems to run all through its tradition (AC: 233). Frye states that the 'romantic fixation which revolves around the beauty of form, in art or elsewhere', is 'a logical target for satire'. <u>In Search of Love and Beauty</u> does not have the mixture of prose and verse of early satire and jerky changes of scene, the examples Frye gives of satire's parody of form. Indeed the episodes are arranged for maximum effect and contrast, a technique enhanced by Jhabvala's experience with

screenplay writing and the shuffling of scenes in the editing room. Yet In Search of Love and Beauty presents a kind of 'parody of form' in its constant shifts of time, and its undercutting of the romance form (AC: 223) reinforcing the view that a story of the quest for Love and Beauty need not necessarily be presented in orderly harmonious sequence. Instead what is suggested is an unending, unfulfilled round of seeking for the unattainable. The 'adventures' of the romance mode are shown except that in the novel they bring the seekers no nearer the final triumph or the knowledge of goals attained (or duty fulfilled) of the romance questers (AC: 186-187). Instead the text constantly undercuts the quest idea announced by the title and the protagonists' idealism by highlighting the fact that fifty years on, the original seekers, the younger additions to the Sonnenblick family, the members of the Academy and Leo himself, are still formulating strategies to combat loneliness and isolation.

The 'parody of form' begins early in the text when after the introductory paragraphs on the talented 'Adonis', Leo Kellerman who would carve a career out of women's need 'to be known,to be found out and probed to the core of their being', the text reminds us that 'by the time [Leo] had reached his present eminence, most of the people at that original coffee party were either dead or senile or had long ago given him up as a charlatan' (IS: 6). The romance motif and the mythic qualities evoked in describing the characters are undercut by the birthday celebrations that are described or referred to in the text. Although signals of the passing of time and the onset of age, birthdays are celebrations of wisdom and maturity, a gathering of revellers and loved ones. The birthday parties of In Search of Love and Beauty confirm not the comprehension of experience but the continuity of delusion and absurdity as at one of these, Regi continues to be attracted to and flirt with the fat and ridiculous Leo, and Louise gives silent thanks for the joy of togetherness when just before that Leo and Marietta have been

making love upstairs in her bedroom (IS: 81-82). A final example may be taken from the novel's ending. It ends with Regi the novel's most selfish and materialistic seeker of Love, without her one true friend, totally unaware that she has brought about Louise's death by causing her to slip and fall. The other character left is Marietta who is puzzled by her mother's words. Bafflement brings the reader back to the childhood episode (IS: 92) and her own lovemaking with Leo (IS: 82) thereby accentuating the absurdity that characterizes the actions of those in search for Love and Beauty. The impression of protagonists as victims of time, acquiring neither enrichment nor good from their quest is implicit in John Updike's comment on In Search of Love and Beauty:

> [It has] moments and epiphanies, but all somehow displayed behind glass like beautiful objects that can no longer be handled. The reader never quite ceases to be an audience, of lives that offer those who live them no alternatives and therefore pass as sheer glossy spectacle, like the existences of animals.
>
> (Weinraub 1983: 106)

This feeling of watching intertwined lives as if they were 'displayed behind glass' is accentuated by the narrative. There is an omniscient narrative voice whose tone alternates between relaxed familiarity and faint mockery of the antics of the seekers. Some of the examples quoted will have already shown this. However immediate distancing is achieved by introductory phrases and clauses that suggest for the reader a sense of looking down on the fabulous adventures of larger-than-life characters who endure and thrive despite set-backs and miseries. A description of Louise's susceptibility to Leo's charms despite their advanced years begins thus: 'Here is Louise in her sixties .... (IS: 7). Other episodes begin with introductions like 'This is what had happened when ....' (IS: 8); 'On such occasions, this was the way the conversation might go ....' (IS: 13). A mention of the way Leo exacts fees from the members begins: 'A word might here be said about Leo's

fees: actually he didn't charge fees ....' (IS: 57). Further distancing is achieved by flashbacks on placing episodes separated by time close to one another emphasizing important changes, as when Louise on her way to the Academy for the last time, sees the snow-covered landscape and remembers a similar day many years ago when she and Bruno went skating and he later proposed to her. More commonly this device highlights the continuity,connectedness and underlying follies and crimes of lives and actions.

Louise and Regi's first quarrel about Leo takes place at the Old Vienna, a restaurant catering mainly for European refugees homesick for the ambience and food of their past and lonely for companionship and love. Leo, especially his physical qualities,dominates the conversation (IS: 38-40). This is followed by another episode at The Old Vienna forty years later when 'The Inseparables' Louise and Regi older and no wiser meet again (IS: 40-42). The differences are noted: they draw glances not because they are attractive but because they are 'tall and old and odd'; Regi's jewellery is 'bigger and more fantastic than ever'; they talk of ailments but beneath these differences are echoes of their past meetings and the nature of their relationship then: Leo's influence, Regi's envy of Louise, her worldliness and Regi's search for her brand of fulfilment in the young men she (under) pays to keep her company, particularly for social functions (IS: 40-42). Other scenes at the Old Vienna are always connected in one way or another with Leo as the talented and charming modern day guru (IS: 60), as stern enforcer of programmes designed only for the followers' good (IS: 61). Like the Academy, the Old Vienna becomes a kind of symbol of the longing for fulfilment and belonging of uprooted, lonely individuals. Thus in an episode in the 1980s when Mark visits the Old Vienna with a business client and his wife (IS: 107-112); old echoes of the quest for love survive. The wife of the business client

flirts with Mark even as he watches his beloved, Kent, with an ardent admirer at the table where Louise and Regi used to sit.

Natasha is the least 'normal' of the characters in the normal world of satire (AC: 224). She is the ingenue, the simpleton figure of irony whose innocence, ignorance or mere common sense expose the complexities of delusion, hypocrisy and the irrationality of prejudice (Muecke 1970: 58). Frye notes that the ingenue figure is 'really a pastoral figure, and like the pastoral, a form congenial to satire, he contrasts a simple set of standards with the complex rationalizations of society' (AC: 232). In her simplicity (few strong family attachments, a desire to serve humanity), self-sufficiency and asexuality Natasha contrasts with the other protagonists and their frenzied search for fulfilment. Her 'high principles' and 'idealism', her 'set of simple standards' consist of 'wanting to be a part of humanity, a tiny worker bee in a vast hive (IS: 18). If the others are constantly engaged in a never-ending search for the perfect relationship and partner, Natasha is the opposite:

> She longed for things to stay as they were, and above all for people to stay where they were: for a permanence that she imagined to have been there in the past.
>
> (IS: 141)

Yet second-phase satire is concerned to point out the inadequacy of the 'simple set of standards' against the 'complexity of experience' and Natasha is thus an outsider figure 'from another world which is either unattainable or associated with something else undesirable' (AC: 232).

This aspect of Natasha as the ingenue figure who highlights society's absurdities and as an outsider figure removed from the realities and needs of modern American life is part of the ironic strategies employed to present a view of a world and of human actions as disjointed, confused and constantly at conflict. At times Natasha is the writer's instrument for irony, setting off selfish silliness and deluded action

whether it is Regi's superficiality, Leo's grossness, the yearnings and longings of a seventy-year old grandmother, or the misery of Mark's turbulent homosexual relationships. It is significant that Natasha's 'longing for things to stay as they were' parallels the Platonic thought that love is a longing to regain a lost happiness. The vision of absolute Beauty was something man's soul enjoyed before it was incarnate (Introd. SYM; [trans.] Hamilton 1951: 17). At other times however, Natasha is the 'outsider' who is so emotionally and physically removed from the complexity of life that as an instrument of irony she is inadequate and ineffectual. The final effect is that of a world where human actions and calculations are whittled by irony since even the actions of its most benign, harmless onlooker are not exempt from contradiction and incongruity.

Natasha's love for Mark is tender, undemanding worship. She shares with her grandmother Louise the capacity for deep love in her 'pure selfless joy' in Mark's presence. The love, 'like a small still pool' contrasts with the intense love games indulged in by her mother Marietta, Mark, Leo and Regi. Yet it is 'small, plain undeveloped' Natasha who reaches the Point when a heightened sense of feeling unites on both the physical and the spiritual level. The language that describes the feeling she has in Mark's company gives Natasha the benefit of a mystical experience:

> There was a peculiar sensation of being attentive and waiting and yet at the same time having already received what she was waiting for. The feeling in her heart ... - as of a very full cup - which came to the point of being a physical sensation. That was why she was afraid of moving: as if she really did hold such a cup in danger of overflowing and spilling some drops of its precious contents.
>
> (IS: 141-142)

The description echoes that of Raymond's feelings when he looks at an example of Indian art work in the company of Gopi the Indian boy he loves

(ND: 129-130). The language echoes the Platonic description of the beloved's feelings towards the lover who has shown solicitous kindness and love towards him (PHA : 64). Here the 'stream of longing' fills the beloved's heart to overflowing causing the excess to return to the beloved's eyes hence to fill his soul with longing and love for the lover. In Natasha (and Raymond's case), deep but sexually unconsummated love is imaged in the cup that is full almost to overflowing.

Despite all this and Mark's affection and care for his sister, she is peripheral to his life and its heady search for Love and Beauty. His awkward, irritatingly unattractive sister is part of the domestic life he prefers to forget in the life he leads outside the limits of family life (IS: 96). This is clearly seen at the end of the novel when Natasha, unable to bear what she sees as the misery and suffering of his homosexual relationships, attempts to stop Mark from fighting over Kent with another older contender, Anthony. She loses out to Kent because the alternatives she offers Mark - preserving the old harmonies of going to Regi's birthday party, cutting Louise's birthday cake for her - are as alien to him as the sexual excitement and pleasure of a conquest are to Natasha. At the end of the episode Natasha is roughly rejected by Mark, ultimately defeated because the alternative life she offers rests on values as fragile as those that motivate Mark's unceasing quest.

Natasha's asexuality makes her both the foil by which the preoccupation with love and love-partners is ironised and the disadvantaged outsider-commentator figure who is, as Leo says deprived of 'one whole side ... God Christ in heaven ... what a side!' (IS: 174). For Leo, Natasha is 'not up to [Nature's] standard'. He acknowledges that she has the Point in that she knows what she wants, unlike the other waifs and strays, but Natasha herself cannot understand the 'division between the physical and the other part' (IS: 133-134). Thus Natasha's value as a gauge for the capacity of others for 'strong unquestioned' permanent

attachments is undercut by the fact that she is passive to the point of nullity and is removed from the very human need for physical love and fulfilment and the consequent misery the search entails (IS: 20, 113-136). If Natasha's role emphasizes the misery of the seekers and their fruitless search for Love and Beauty, it also makes the desperate seekers appear more human and whole.

In his writings on the history of the literature of love in the Western world, de Rougemont sees one of its central motifs as the obsession with the cultivation of passion, the enjoyment of the suffering and the celebration of the pain (de Rougemont 1983: 38-42). In Marietta and Mark, the alazon seekers of In Search of Love and Beauty, we see the 'drive towards satisfaction' (IS: 117) in terms of de Rougemont's ideas, that their goal is 'the pilgrimage, not the pilgrimage place ... not the satisfaction *of* the desire for union with the beloved but the satisfaction *in* the desire for union with the beloved' (Siegel 1964: 138).

Although not subject to Leo's therapy they are no different from Leo's student Janet who had been in search of love and beauty and in the course of this quest had recklessly entangled herself in one harmful liaison after another (IS: 137). We see how the quests of mother and son 'diverge into intricate paths' which become 'mutually exclusive' as, at the end of the novel, Mark asserts his right to lead his own life style and Marietta is left with the knowledge she has always been afraid to admit, Mark's homosexuality.

That Marietta's preoccupation with 'higher, abstract things, about Ideas in the Platonic sense' (IS: 64), is largely due to the childhood experience of watching her mother in a Dionysian sexual romp, and loyalty for her father Bruno, is clear. There is also the constant reminder of Leo's gross sexuality in his affair with Louise and his visits to their home; occasions when Leo flaunts his sexuality to the young girl (IS: 64). However Marietta is ultimately the deceiving and self-deceived

alazon rather than a victim figure and there is a hint of linguistic irony in the crucial description of Marietta:

> Everything about her was unselfconscious; because she didn't really think about herself but about higher, abstract things; about Ideas in the Platonic sense.
>
> (IS: 64)

The image created is one that Marietta sees, or would like to see of herself; yet there is implied criticism in that Marietta is unable to look into herself and that a little consciousness of the self might not be amiss. Thus it is that Marietta is torn by conflicting, paradoxical demands in her quest after 'Ideas' and ideals, desire 'to take in everything' (IS: 147) and the need 'to glory in variety' (IS: 65). Her actions appear dictated by two extremes of keeping her secrets to herself and being unselfconscious, open and above-board (IS: 64, 123). 'Physical love ... embodied in Leo ... was detestable', yet she succumbs to Leo sexually. 'She believed in Love' yet is involved in a series of apathetic relationships and becomes progressively incapable of sympathy for any problem except her own (IS: 147). She insists on knowing everything about Mark's life but closes herself to the fact of his homosexuality. Her love for Mark is 'an excess of love', needful, alienating and possessive to the point of unnaturalness. Marietta aims at being the Platonic lover of moral beauty who has gone through and risen above mundane physical Eros, yet her actions revolve round matters to do with physical relations. From personal aims for herself to those for Mark and Natasha, Marietta's plans backfire. Harmonious relations with Ahmed her musician-lover and Sujata the Indian singer and dancer are enjoyed but not absorbed: Marietta continues to live and love, like Janet and Shirley, in a dance of her own.

Marietta's divisive, destructive love for Mark is an ironic corollary to the love that is 'the desire and pursuit of the whole', man's

attempt to regain his former happy state by uniting himself to his lost half. It reminds us of Aristophanes' half-playful theory of the three sexes and how Zeus separated them (SYM: 62-64). Mark is therefore the other half of Marietta's female whole. However Mark is also a homosexual yearning like Aristophanes' male after the other male counterpart. This dual aspect of Mark, female and male is captured in small but concrete details as when Marietta discusses intimate health problems with Mark as if she is talking to a woman with Mark sympathetic yet maintaining his maleness in wanting to leave quickly to meet his lover (IS: 26-27). Marietta is sexually aroused by Kent, Mark's lover, as she imagines Kent's effect on him: '... the sensation his presence evoked in her was not for herself but for Mark' (IS: 158). When Marietta sees Kent's pictures of Mark, studies that are 'heartbreakingly familiar' to her, Marietta's reaction is both that of mother and lover and of Mark as male and female:

> He hadn't changed at all - he was over thirty now but she saw that his back was still slender, long and boyish, ending up in buttocks as sweetly rounded as a girl's.
>
> (IS: 160)

A pivotal scene in the mother-son relationship occurs when Mark and Marietta quarrel at Louise's Christmas dinner. The description of the quarrel captures the irony, unnaturalness and pathos of what should be a close bonding as Aristophanes' provocative, playful theory of unity and abiding love is replayed with hostility and frustration predominating:

> Mark and Marietta did at that moment look like two women locked together in a fight. Or rather,two girls, for both were slim and fair and almost the same height .... They stood face to face and glaring into each other's beautiful light green eyes .... Both were yelling, but each so loud that neither could hear the other. He was calling her bitch and she — irrationally but instinctively — used the same word for him. Their contorted faces mirrored each other.
>
> (IS: 124-125)

Of all the seekers it is perhaps Marietta who has the saddest end of all. The only real caring she is capable of is for Mark, but so obsessive is this that in the final scene together, Mark's consolatory response to her confession of her love for him is loaded with ironic counterpoint. Mark's 'Naturally, I expect you to', becomes in the light of past events, a reminder and an admonition to love him more 'naturally' like a mother. The scene also captures the reversed positions of the relationship: the helpless, confused parent and the confident offspring. Two images of Marietta remain with us. The first is of self-deceived alazon standing at the bottom of Mark's staircase pretending not to hear Kent's footsteps upstairs. The second, a representative figure of the failed lover of 'higher, abstract things' who to the end can understand neither the spiritual nor the physical import behind Louise's 'I'm coming!'.

Marietta's story fits in well with the central theme of second phase irony. The frustration and pain she experiences are the result of her too-great fixations on 'Ideas' and her inability to fit these into the varied and 'inconvenient data' of her life and background. Love for her is a concept - 'She believed, of course in Love, but had not much time for men' (IS: 65). Yet her life consists of a series of lovers and profane relationships. Natasha is adopted as part of Marietta's plan to assert her father's Jewish side and reject Tim's Americanness but Marietta's idea of Jewish is mixed up with Russian and Natasha turns out to be far from 'the embodiment of music, moonlight and poetic feeling' of a Checkov heroine (IS: 14). Earlier, Marietta's marriage to Tim was a rejection of her European identity and particularly of Leo and all that she detested in his way of life (IS: 65), yet, she eventually gives in sexually to him.

The description of Mark's 'set of standards' reverberates with Platonic echoes:

> It was love he wanted, he craved, and he was ardent and tireless in the pursuit of it. He met with many disappointments ... but his ideal was never dimmed. This was

> always embodied for him in Youth and Beauty ... it was only there that love for him was to be found. Yes he believed in the beauty of the soul, but it was necessary for him actually to see it in physical form.
>
> (IS: 44-45)

In Kent's 'Youth and Beauty' as with all of Mark's other lovers, there is no guarantee of 'beauty of soul'. Like his mother, Mark is the incomplete Platonic seeker. For Plato's lover the ability to see beauty of soul where beauty of form does not exist marks his ascent towards the awareness of moral beauty (SYM: 92). The quest after 'Desire ... in so poignant, so refined a form that it reached to ... The Point' (IS: 112), never gets beyond the physical plane as Mark seriously and tirelessly pursues the two perishable commodities of lovers, Youth and Beauty. Like an ironic echo of the 'madness' of the man who has seen 'true beauty' and is reminded by the sight of 'beauty on earth' Mark 'endeavours to fly upward, but in vain, exposing himself to the reproach of insanity because like a bird he fixes his gaze on the heights to the neglect of things below' (PHA: 56). Like Marietta, Mark too is the Platonic lover caught unwittingly in his own 'Ideas'. The romance of seeking out beauty and perfection, of never allowing one's ideal to be 'dimmed', of enjoying the spontaneity of Greek Eros in the classical ambience and pastoral beauty of his new house are exposed as a delusion. The disappointments and bitterness of Mark's life (IS: 45), prove the fact that the ideal he chooses to live by does not equip him to deal with unworthy beloveds nor with his own failings. Mark himself eventually sees Kent 'with new eyes' and he is 'just a lout', 'sullen and unattractive'. Instead of the harmonious reciprocity and sharing of wisdom (SYM: 92-93) there are constant and bitter quarrels as Mark exerts his right of possession over Kent, the same way he 'took possession' of Jeff sexually. Kent is the 'beautiful boy' who delights in being perversely uncooperative and hurtful, the ironic reversal of the Platonic beautiful beloved who will engender wise thoughts and ambition in the lover. The degree of success of Mark's quest for love and beauty is

reflected in the image we have of Anthony the lonely, ageing homosexual with his eyes 'full of fear', 'pale and drained of colour as though washed by nights of tears' (IS: 161). It is captured in Mark's thoughts when he looks at Anthony's 'strained and old' face. Looking at him,'Mark might have been looking at his own face twenty years later, but not yet, not now' (IS: 184).

Jhabvala's short story "Commensurate Happiness" (1980) offers interesting parallels with In Search of Love and Beauty. Its four characters have counterparts in the novel. The grandmother Jeanette, a widow of German-Jewish origin, is a mix of Louise and Marietta; strong, capable of enduring love, yet needing to dominate and control the lives of the two grandchildren who have grown up in her care. The young protagonists Marie and Hughie are cousins, products of divorced parents and as close as brother and sister. It is expected that they will one day marry. Hughie is Mark's prototype, the anguished homosexual, quarrelling and weeping with his lover over the phone. Marie is Natasha with a pure and selfless love for Hughie and willing to accept him as he is. Finally there is Wanda, once Otto's (Jeanette's husband) mistress now self-proclaimed family-friend and solver of problems for Jeanette's family. The story captures well the sense of isolation and loneliness of the grandmother and her wards, and the incoherence and conflict at the heart of American life in which Jeanette and Otto's children did nothing much 'beyond marrying and divorcing and remarrying and spending a lot of money on themselves' (Commensurate Happiness: 5). The sense of sadness is made all the more poignant by the fact that at the end the characters convince themselves that they are happy. Ironically the happiness is small, commensurate with the lowering of expectations. Marie, from the beginning learns to be 'reasonable in her expections'; Hughie offers to marry Marie for she is his only 'family'. Jeanette, after years of tolerance of being in Wanda's shadow will learn to accept yet another, unsatisfactory

marriage. The story is an early model for the novels portrayal of a world where happiness is seldom commensurate with the endless search and sacrifices for love.(6)

Louise is the novel's most faithful, complete and unselfconscious lover. She is both the profane lover and the one most equipped to make the ascent, as a follower of Eros, from the purely sensible. Her story may indeed be seen as a kind of pilgrimage inspired by love, an echo of the quest of the true seeker of Wisdom for the knowledge of absolute Beauty. Her love, more than that of Natasha's throws into relief the more self-conscious love of the other protagonists.

Louise's love for Leo is the longest in the novel, the most enduring in a story of short-lived, intense relationships and easy sexual liaisons. It contrasts with Regi's callous seeking of love and beauty for crassly selfish reasons whether it is in the succession of underpaid young companions, the series of rich husbands or the affair she has with Leo motivated mainly by malicious spite at Louise's relationship with Leo (IS: 42-43). For sixty years or so Louise manages not only to sustain attachment towards Leo but to live a life dedicated to love. Louise like Stephanie and Jeff reveals some of the qualities Frye attributes to the small group of 'high Ydgrunites' in Butler's Erewhon:

> [They] had the *eiron's* sense of the value of conventions that had been long established and were now harmless; they had the *eiron's* distrust of the ability of anyone's reason, including their own, to transform society into a better structure. But they were also intellectually detached from the conventions they lived with, and were capable of seeing their anomalies and absurdities as well as their stabilizing conservatism.
>
> (AC: 232)

Aware of others' and their own weaknesses and vulnerability, the eirons are neither 'victims nor predators' in the search for fulfilment. They are not subject to the irony focussed on the quest of deluded alazons who attempt to 'systematize or formulate' a scheme of what they ought to do

(AC: 229). The eirons, like the satirist, 'feel that experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it'; Leo, Mark and Marietta on the other hand, make 'a selection of standards from experience' (AC: 229).

As with Leo, there are allusions to classical figures in descriptions of Louise. She is Bruno's 'goddess'; Marietta has Louise in mind when she learns 'about Juno, Minerva, Ceres and all those goddesses' (IS: 62). Big beautiful and stately she portrays the qualities accorded her - wisdom, womanliness, nurture - with dignity. Where classical allusions have a comic-ironic effect on our perception of Leo, in Louise's case they enhance her position as the protagonist who does not *seek* but *lives* a life of love and beauty. Louise serves to define Leo's role of rogue-alazon. At the same time an eiron's enduring love for an alazon must imply some redeeming qualities in the beloved. A number of episodes highlight the closeness and intensity of the Leo-Louise affair.

The scene in which Leo and Louise make love with Dionysian abandon and which Marietta is witness to (IS: 91-92) sparkles with the kind of happiness and sexual energy that no philosophy of Leo's can achieve. The love Louise has for Leo shows the fulfilment physical love can bring the lover, one that can refine and endure. The episode in which Louise defends her affair with Leo to Regi as neither 'vulgar' nor the purely sexual relationship Regi takes it to be, is followed up in a later related incident. This is the reconciliation scene between Louise and Leo after he subjects her to public disgrace for her shortcomings as an Academy student. It portrays the physical attraction between the two and in Leo's 'oh yes, *only*' is the implication that physical love is powerful and binding and sufficient:

> She felt she had no choice - she had to go to him ... he grasped her tight ... before going under, she murmured, as if to save herself by deprecation, 'It's only physical, that's all it is.' 'Oh yes, *only*,' he murmured.
>
> (IS: 64)

Such episodes help to soften somewhat the stronger satire on the nature of emotional fulfilment Leo offers at the Academy. Although the Leo-Louise relationship eventually becomes a one-sided love affair, the enduring closeness between these two 'big' persons like 'two giants' is captured in the ending to a story Leo tells Natasha early in the lovers' relationship:

> 'And just because they were angry with each other and fifty years passed during which they were not on speaking terms, do you think they could stop loving each other?' .... 'Even if one hundred years had passed, still they'd go on loving each other.
>
> (IS: 17)

It is Louise who makes some ascent to something 'higher' through the enhancing benefits of love. The passionate desirous love for Leo is subdued to a caring, maternal love not unlike the love shown to her family-members and to Regi and Eric. For Louise more than any other character, love is a desire for good and for happiness not just for the self but for those who are loved. She is reminiscent of one of Iris Murdoch's moral women, seekers of the Good. At the point of death there is the possibility that Louise appears to actualize what has been a merely verbal concept of Leo - The Point. The Point is achieved when Eros and Death converge and Louise's 'I'm coming!' suggests sexual joy and perhaps an anticipation of something or someone sublime. Louise's story is of a pilgrimage from the sensible to the ideal. In her death are echoes of the final stage for the seeker of wisdom who is aware of the beauty of knowledge and finally sees that vision of the Form of Beauty (SYM: 93). There is a mystical note to Louise's death, one that parallels the indescribable, incommunicable religious experience of the Platonic seeker's final vision (Introd. SYM; [trans.] Hamilton 1951: 24). The impression created is that of the beginning of something joyous in contrast to the joyless group of people left behind and Leo's mad drive in the 'snow and mist'.

Yet like the portrayal of Natasha, Louise's role is also subject to irony. She highlights the shallow questings of the other seekers but is herself a deceived and self deceiving alazon. There are happy echoes of the true Platonic quester in her story but she is in bondage, like all protagonists of the ironic mode. As the unfaithful wife whose meetings with her lover are blatantly conducted in her own home, Louise brings misery to Bruno, and confusion for Marietta. Her role contributes to the *frisson* that exists in the novel's portrayal of the utter futility of engaging in the quest for Love and Beauty and its glorious, rejuvenating benefits.

The text confirms Bruno's quiet suffering (IS: 8; 38), it shows Marietta's sexual confusion and subtly highlights Louise's self-indulgence and weakness in references that are more oblique than those that emphasize her empathy and dignity. When Bruno is sick, criticism of Louise is implied in the slightly dramatic nature of her demeanour: how 'tears like molten lead surged into her eyes'; how Bruno's suffering brought (too late) 'grief, despair and repentance'; and with his death, the protracted mourning and the 'toneless voice' she had during those days (IS: 32). Her love for Leo is indeed long and enduring but there is a great deal of truth in her only partly-serious assessment of her position: 'A useless old woman with useless thoughts about an old man who doesn't even want me' (IS: 95). When it is considered that Leo's last comments on Regi and Louise is that they are 'those two poor old women' and that Louise dies on the couch where Leo has had all his sexual encounters with selected young devotees, the Louise-Leo relationship seems to be 'a piece of history or even ... of archaeology' (IS: 14) and nothing much else.

Despite the ironic exposure of self-delusion and manipulation all in the name of love, the novel emphasizes the validity of the search for love. The search is a measure of a character's worth, bringing with it enhancing qualities of commitment, sacrifice and the 'glorious' joys of

physical love that Sujata, Marietta's Indian friend, speaks of so feelingly:

> Why did they come to a human being ... unexpectedly, irresistibly .... if it was so wrong to have these feelings, then why were they sent? .... If it was wrong, if it was shameful, then why was it there? And why was it so glorious?
>
> (IS: 86)

Yet the novel makes clear that the joys are ephemeral and the protagonists caught in an endless ritual of seeking. Eros is wonderful but the world is filled with unworthy Leos and Kents. The satire demonstrates 'the infinite variety of what men do' and 'the futility of systematizing or formulating a coherent scheme of what they do'. In Search of Love and Beauty portrays the relentless search for happiness that is inevitably hopeless, resulting in an enforced, depressing homogeneity of contemporary life. Yet is also shows that the search for Eros though often debilitating and destructive is never unnecessary.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIFTH PHASE IRONY OF THREE CONTINENTS

Three Continents (1987)

Three Continents presents themes and ideas closely related to those in the three novels that precede it: New Dominion, Hea . and Dust and In Search of Love and Beauty. It offers a perspective, the darkest of Jhabvala's ouevre, on the subject of self-delusion and the quest for love and fulfilment sought from religious or secular movements, or, more specifically, from their charismatic leaders. Three Continents combines the Indian setting and 'spiritualists' of A New Dominion with the portrayal of young, rich and needy Americans like those in In Search of Love and Beauty, looking for something more than the jaded relationships, family conflicts and loneliness their affluent lifestyles generate.

Three Continents is the story of the search of the Wishwell twins, Harriet and Michael, for 'Beauty, Truth and Justice' in their emotional involvement with Crishi and their support for the Fourth World movement and its expansion in three continents: America, Europe, (represented by England) and India.(1) It recounts the twins' subjection to Crishi's charismatic appeal and Harriet's marriage to him and resulting rift with her twin as his initial euphoria changes to disillusionment with the movement and its leaders. Crishi's access to the Wishwell money and property for the illegal art trafficking that he conducts under cover of the movement is complete with Michael's murder and Harriet's complete subjection to his will.(2)

The title of the novel is ironic in that the scope and ambition of spreading the Rawul's word in three continents, is in reality a cruel manipulation by Crishi of the twins' youthful vulnerability and idealism. The geographic scope of Three Continents is reduced to the dark, sinister palace at Dhoka where Harriet Wishwell surrenders her future and fortunes.

The ironic implications of the title are emphasized by the novel's three-part structure. In 'Propinquity', the American section, the emphasis is on division and disharmony and the dangers of '"freedom" of passion' (de Rougemont 1983: 283): divorced, quarrelling parents Manton and Lindsay, their erratic love-life and self-indulgent lifestyles, the isolation of the twins and the upheaval caused by the arrival of the Rawul's entourage. The only nearness that is shown is the destructive closeness between the twins and Crishi, one which threatens the natural propinquity the twins share.

'The Family', the title for the section on the movement's activities in England is an ironic comment on the inter-relationships of the assorted group of spiritual leaders, opportunists, followers and misfits held together by everything but familial motives. The title suggests perhaps an ironic connection with the 'family' or 'nest' of the Charles Manson cult of the late 1960s.(3) Crishi's sexual power over the women: Anna, Sultan, Renée and Harriet's abandonment of personal ego through sexual submissiveness are echoes of Manson's hypnotic power over his disciples. Indeed the second section of the novel highlights sexual excess of one kind or another. Harriet in the course of wandering all over London for sexual longing of Crishi ends up having sex with a stranger. Even with the 'family' of the aged guru Babaji and his two faithful women devotees (whose house the Rawul tries to acquire), a bizarre note is struck as Harriet's account suggests that the Babaji's sexual urges are as strong as when he once reduced female worshippers to sobbing ecstasy (TC: 197; 261). It is also in the second part of the novel that under the ideals of universal love and concern for the less affluent countries, Crishi, the real manager of the movement and Renée increase their drug-trafficking and smuggling of Indian art works.

Finally 'In The Rawul's' Kingdoms' the third and final section, India is characterized by images of darkness, mystery and ambivalence. It is

supposed to be the place where civilization first began yet the Rawul, ruled now by his ambitious first wife, the Rani Bai, stays on in the 'upholstered prison' of a Delhi hotel wooing politicians and prominent citizens for his political future in India, seen as the necessary step towards spreading his word to the whole world. Dhoka becomes the place where Harriet, on her twenty-first birthday knowingly assists Crishi in the cover-up of her twin's murder and the 'Rawul's Kingdom' is presided over by the demonic power of Crishi.

The shift from second phase satire to fifth-phase irony of Jhabvala's two Western novels (separated by four years) is essentially a darker perspective on the shared themes of isolation and the hopelessness of the quest for Love and Beauty. In In Search of Love and Beauty, satire is directed at the protagonists' preoccupation with concepts, theories and ideals. These are shown to be inadequate, and hopelessly insufficient against the complexity of life itself. Plato's ideas on the search for love, the transcending of the sensual and sensible to the non-physical level come as much under scrutiny as Leo's numerous programmes and guides for self-development. The world of Three Continents , however, suggests a general absence of even these ethics and codes of behaviour. The novel takes on mythic overtones of later-phase ironies where ritual sacrifice, omens, gods and demonic imagery combine to present an inevitable cycle of events. The world Three Continents portrays is one of futility and nihilism where love and 'searching for Om' are debased and the only affirmation is the impossibility of good. The twins' idealism finds a focus on figures like the diabolical Crishi and the puppet-leader Rawul, the latter a self-appointed Saviour of a new world civilization who is as easily led by stronger rogue-alazons as the twins. The pessimism arises also from the first-person account of a flawed narrator whose text attests to the features of fifth-phase irony - a resigned acceptance of

inevitability and the cycle of fate, experience with the point of epiphany closed and the affirmation of hell and suffering (AC: 237-238).

The ceremony of the Rawul being weighed against a pile of philosophical books (TC: 278-279) is an ironic comment on the empty ostentation and fraudulent ideals of the Rawul's movement, one that operates a smuggling racket with the Rawul's carefully concealed knowledge. The Rawul is weighed against 'the Wisdom of all ages and all cultures, the Wisdom of Mankind'. The books range from Plato and the Koran through to Kierkegaard. It is a publicity stunt of a profitable organization that decides to spend as little as possible on these books of wisdom by buying tattered second-hand and cheap editions. That Michael, thoughtful and committed, should be so inspired with the scene, (Harriet thinks of the Rawul as a kind of giant exotic pomegranate sitting on the scales) sums up Michael's tragic vulnerability and accentuates the ironic perspective on those who peddle salvation.

Unlike the more diverse, pervasive Platonic references and associations of In Search of Love and Beauty those of Three Continents are comparatively muted, restricted mainly to the twins and to their relations with Crishi. The central Platonic echo is in the twinning of the two protagonists. They are shown to be emotionally one (TC: 336), physically typical, 'pale and slight, and with a faraway self-absorbed look in our strange eyes' (TC: 137). Yet, as will be shown, they represent the opposing aspects of the charioteer/human soul of Plato's Phaedrus, torn by conflicting needs and loyalties. Michael is upright and ascetic, fair and idealistic, Harriet is dark, overcome by sexual obsession for Crishi, wanton and rebellious with her increasing closeness to Crishi. In a sense, the psychological scheme of Plato's Republic IV where the three elements of reason, spirit and appetite are distinguished, is discerned in the defeat of Michael's 'reason' and 'spirit' by Harriet's appetite (Preamble to Myth, PHA, (trans.) Hamilton 1973: 50). There is also the

twins' physical attraction to Crishi, their subjection to Eros, recorded in the way they simultaneously feel the same sensation on seeing Crishi, as of 'a live electric wire suddenly coming into contact with an innermost part of one's being' (TC: 16). The homosexual element of Michael's love and the sublimation of this for the larger ideals of the Movement and his sister's marriage to his beloved are further Platonic signals. These and the twins' search, specifically Michael's for 'something ... better', his expectations of Beauty, Truth and Justice provide the muted but important Platonic frame of reference for Three Continents.

Much of the darkness of Three Continents and our sense of looking down on a scene of unrelieved bondage is located in the first-person narrative. What differentiates Harriet from Lee, the unreliable narrator of A New Dominion and Ms. Rivers in the later part of Heat and Dust, is that unlike her two earlier counterparts, Harriet is writing of past events - 'a lot of time has passed' - yet is still unable to clearly state the fact of Crishi's evil or Michael's murder or her position in relation to Crishi at the time of writing. References to these are obliquely hinted at, or couched in language that implies that the older Harriet is still in some kind of bondage to Crishi: his 'prisoner', still obsessed by passion for him or suffering extreme alienation and mental distress relieved only by a detailed re-living of the past events. Yet the account is written and it is in this that we see the alazon - narrator's self-betrayal, the rare admissions of doubt and reservation, retrospective, maturer thought and the actions of the other protagonists, all caught in 'experience with the point of epiphany closed up' in a world where hell is as certain as the possibility of heaven (AC: 237). The older Harriet seems as morally inert as she was years ago.

In a way, the powerlessness of the younger Harriet to fight Crishi's tyranny (one that ends with her allowing the final atrocity on Michael's memory) and the older Harriet's inability to free herself from the past

may be seen as an expression of Jhabvala's own sense of history. Harriet's loss of moral volition like that of so many of Jhabvala's women protagonists, Lee in A New Dominion, the narrator of 'An Experience of India', Chameli in 'A Bad Woman', the narrator of 'On Bail', Sophia in 'Desecration' all show the same moral inertia that overcame the world as it watched the atrocities perpetrated on the Jews during the Holocaust. Harriet's submission and passivity capture also the Jewish helplessness in the face of tyranny and terror. Thus Jhabvala's latest protagonist is both victim figure and guilty conspirator, a view concurrent with the dark irony of Three Continents.

In the short story 'How I Became a Holy Mother', the narrator Anne maintains a cool, irreverent attitude towards all the pseudo-religious goings on at the ashram she visits. The story's wry ironic humour is the product of the narrator's awareness of her own and the others' shortcomings. She is under no delusions about the nature of the fulfilment from the movement and Vishwa, the guru/lover, fully enjoying the mutual benefits of their sexual accord. Harriet's text on the other hand is deceptive: it is long and detailed yet Harriet's true feelings, particularly the later Harriet are not clear. She relentlessly records every detail but leaves the judging of her actions and that of the others to the reader. Her writing style is not ironic, she appears to be incapable of self-irony but the whole text is a vindication of her victimization and a statement of the ironic gap between dream and reality.

The discomfort the reader feels about Harriet's passion for Crishi, her feelings for him at the time of writing the account, is due partly to the fact that Harriet is made the narrator and reporter of events and their consequences. Harriet's intelligence, her perceptiveness, do not quite fit in with the stupidity and blind passion she shows. Too much, as it were, is left for Harriet to manage and the authorial withdrawing does

make for a novel that misses out on the taut, sharp irony of Jhabvala's earlier writing.

It is therefore as a study of self-delusion and exploitation that Three Continents reveals aspects of fifth-phase irony. The novel shows in both the past and present, Harriet madly in love or obsessed with a character whom the present Harriet presents as a heartless rogue. As such it is a reworking of the theme of the search for Love and Beauty that is so important in Jhabvala's later ironies. It presents the vulnerability of lonely women to the Swamijis , Nawabs, Leos of the world. The question posed of whether it is better to love them or not love them is just as important here as in the earlier novels. The answer Three Continents offers, however, aligns it with A New Dominion rather than with In Search of Love and Beauty - the misery and human suffering far outweigh the corrupt relationships and the delights of Eros. Crishi becomes Harriet's whole existence and her abdication of self a Nietzschean 'gift of body and soul, without reservation, without regard for anything whatever' (quoted in de Beauvoir 1988: 652).

Harriet's isolation and victimization is central to the study of Three Continents. Her story reflects fifth-phase irony's emphasis on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune (AC: 237). Harriet and Michael are typical children of the sixties who sought to fulfil a deep religious need from alternative and non-conventional religious movements, Eastern religion teachers and sophisticated mystical-occult teachers (Melton 1986: 106).(4) From the early account in 'Propinquity' we see Michael and Harriet's readiness for Crishi's hold over them, in their self-absorbed yet lonely existence. Their travels with their diplomat grandfather, the interrupted education at expatriate schools, Michael's travels in search of spiritual knowledge and their careful avoidance of the self-indulgent lifestyles of their parents make up Anna Sultan's assessment of them as Harriet records:

> [We were] nineteen-year-old twins who hadn't managed to finish their education or even had to work or make contact with other people ... self-centred, self-conscious, uptight, and definitely weird, typical last-of-the-line scions of a once prominent and money-making American family.
>
> (TC: 137)

When Crishi appears it is to fulfil Michael's erotic/spiritual longing and Harriet's hunger for 'that intense physical way, which was the one way that had been left out of our love, Michael's and mine' (TC: 127). We read of Harriet's deeper submission to Crishi and Michael's disillusionment and fury with Crishi, the eroded aspirations of the Fourth World Movement to a political party. The quarrel with and subsequent death of Michael at the hands of the Bhais, warlike Indians engaged to be guards for the Movement, speed up Crishi's plans to lure Harriet to Dhoka where she signs away the Wishwell money and helps her husband produce a more convincing suicide note from Michael than the one Crishi has concocted. The wheel comes full cycle as Harriet, isolated at the beginning from family ties and love, suffers at the end an extreme isolation when she knowingly takes part in the cover-up of the murder of the twin with whom she 'often felt as with one body' and 'never had to finish sentences with each other, we always knew what we meant and usually agreed on everything' (TC: 16; 14).

The misery and disillusionment the twins encounter after meeting Crishi who is 'Om, the real thing', is made more darkly ironic by the fact that they are seekers motivated to seek 'something other ... better' (TC: 11), through love, with 'expectations .. of Beauty, Truth and Justice' (TC: 383). For Michael the idealist the Platonic quest for Eros of the higher level, 'an ideocentric and creative love of abstractions of universal significance' (Vlastos 1984: 24), is never realized as fascination for Crishi brings with it frustration, physical and emotional breakdown and death. For Harriet the initial impetus to seek for

'something ... better' with her twin is lost in a destructive sexual madness that is an ironic debasement of Plato's lower Eros, physical love, which though inferior to the love of wisdom, nevertheless has its special benefits.

Fifth-phase irony's concern to show 'experience ... with the point of epiphany closed up' and its characteristic of being 'less moral and more generalized and metaphysical in its interest, less melioristic and more stoical and resigned' is part of the larger movement of ironic literature from realism towards myth. The demonic mythical pattern is seen in the pharmakos figures Harriet and Michael and the tyrant-leader, a kind of anti-god who endures and is strengthened by the sacrifice of the victims. The central principle of ironic myth is however best approached as a parody of romance and Michael and Harriet are also the victim-questers who have nothing to show for at the end of a quest and experiences with the wonderful or miraculous. The quest-romance depicts 'the victory of fertility over the waste-land', an aspect of which is the union of male and female (AC: 193). Whether it is in the Crishi-Harriet union or the original but disrupted union of Michael and Harriet Three Continents offers no possibility of fertility or growth in its male-female unions.

The pharmakos,victim or scapegoat figure is prominent in the later phases of tragedy and in the corresponding last three phases of the ironic mythos (AC: 41; 148). In the world of fifth-phase irony that Three Continents presents, there is no possibility of an apocalyptic world (AC: 367). This is associated with 'the heaven of religion' its imagery suggested in terms of human desire (AC: 141). In Three Continents demonic imagery operats presenting a world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion (AC: 147). It is to this world that Harriet and Michael belong. Michael is the sacrificial victim, his death necessary for the

strength of the tyrant-leader. Harriet is another kind of pharmakos. She is not only victim to Crishi's tyranny but also the instrument of her own destruction. In helping establish Crishi's supremacy and aiding in the expulsion of the other pharmakos, Harriet destroys the one who is 'dearer to me than anyone, still, even now' (TC: 127).

Harriet's 'death' comes in the complete negation of her individuality, a submission to Crishi's will, in fact a transcending of the ego that brings not serenity but pain and grief. Images of a 'tearing apart' are implied in the forcing apart of the twins by Crishi. In Michael this is seen in his physical and emotional deterioration (this will be discussed later), in Harriet it is manifested in the gradual change in Harriet's personality: she becomes closer to Crishi anticipating his thoughts, she develops devious cunning and distrust of others and a tendency to violence (TC: 266; 316; 341). Harriet's twinning with Michael is a deeper, more profound pairing off than Jhabvala's other vulnerable women with alter egos who are usually male, homosexual, and more stable than them. In A New Dominion there are Lee and Raymond, in Heat and Dust, Olivia and Harry, and in In Search of Love and Beauty Marietta and Mark. In the twins' idealistic search for 'something better than there was' they are united in their attraction for the same person. In this we can see allusions to Aristophanes' speech in The Symposium. The twins in loving Crishi are like 'the mere broken tally of a man' reunited with his 'corresponding tally', their attraction for him simply 'the desire and pursuit of the whole' (SYM: 62). Yet ironically the encounter with the 'other half' brings not 'affection and kinship and love' (SYM: 63) but unhappiness and division. In providing 'that intense physical way of loving' (TC: 127) absent between Michael and Harriet, Crishi separates the natural harmony making them as it were, subject in their own way, to the dangers of Eros and the pull of the black horse. It is significant that on her wedding night, the beginning of new

links and loyalties, Harriet seeks her natural other half, an unconscious, poignant attempt to get back the old unity:

> And when I opened the door of his room, he was there - lying on the bed with a book, as always. I was so relieved, so relieved, I had to hold on to the door handle for a moment .... I put on his old robe .... He moved his feet so I could lie properly. My eyes, fixed on his face, began slowly to close .... I woke up once and found Michael asleep too, with the light still on and the book on his chest. I ... went back to sleep, my feet touching his shoulder, and his mine.
>
> (TC: 154)

Like the undesirable element of the comic society who must be got rid of, Michael is the victim-figure whose absence will allow Crishi's rule to be even stronger and more powerful than before. The idea of social revenge on the 'rascal' who refuses to conform to the enlightened society is overturned as Michael becomes the 'rebel' of the society that at first promises a new harmony from 'the collective wisdom of the world' but diverges to become a thriving smuggling racket on the one hand and a new political party that panders to the affluent for support.

In searching for 'Om, the real thing', 'something much more' than love, Michael goes through the romance-quester's agon or conflict; ironically they centre round not minor antagonists but the two people Michael loves, Crishi and Harriet. The pathos or death-struggle (AC: 187) again centres round Crishi and his band of thugs, the Bhais. For this modern seeker of romance's 'golden age' there is no discovery or recognition: even in death there is no exaltation of the hero. Michael dies a victim.

There is poignant irony in Harriet's self-satisfied claim of her own and Michael's special abilities:

> Well, Michael and I were used to thinking big - we had always done it. While our parents were having marital squabbles and adulterous love affairs and our grandparents were giving diplomatic cocktail parties, he and I were struggling with the concepts of Maya and Nirvana, and how to transcend our egos.

(TC: 17)

What happens to the twins reflects fifth phase irony's emphasis on the portrayal of the natural cycle of fortune for two introverted, idealistic young people attempting to transcend their egos and seek 'something ... better' in a cruel, exploitative world. As the story progresses the irony is that Michael and Harriet are still 'struggling with concepts' for Maya (Illusion) is taken to be the bliss of Nirvana. Michael, often regarded as 'subhuman' or 'superhuman' (TC: 185) by others and by Harriet as someone with 'inner vision', is an outsider from the beginning. Yet in his search for 'something ... better' and his dedication to 'examining truth and faith and every other fundamental principle' (TC: 41) Michael is a failed seeker of Beauty and Truth, because the chosen beloved is unworthy of his devotion and attention and the cause for a new world, a fraud. Agathon in The Symposium speaks of Love as 'supreme in beauty and goodness himself, and ... the cause of like qualities in others' (SYM: 71). As his disillusionment increases with the menial activities he is entrusted with and with Crishi's lack of commitment, Michael enjoys little of the beauty and goodness his quest should bestow on him. He deteriorates both physically and emotionally, losing the comely beauty of Plato's seeker. Michael is a faint parallel of the human soul who has had a glimpse of the truth in its former existence but is unable to recollect that 'world of reality' (PHA: 56). Unable to enjoy the vision of his quest through the Rawul's movement, Michael is unable to grow his wings again for the flight upwards: he becomes subject to the 'pollution of the walking sepulchre which we call a body, to which we are bound like an oyster to its shell' (PHA: 57). The 'slender, upright clean and fair' Michael (TC: 163) loses his 'ascetic' look, his eyes lose their clear intensity of gaze: 'unblinking and almost blank in deadly certainty' (TC: 205) and attest to his confusion, exposure to the military training the movement's followers are made to undergo (TC: 186)

and possibly the influence of drugs. He is unkempt and a boil festers above his upper lip. Sonya the step-grandmother who comes all the way to Delhi to be with the twins feels he is no longer the old Michael strong like 'a rock' (TC: 300). His suffering in both mind and body makes him edgy and aggressive, his language is rough and coarse and he acquires Crishi's tendency to violence (TC: 238; 270). Made to arrange dinner parties and as Crishi's courier for art objects smuggled ostensibly to fund the movement, Michael's eventual disillusionment and instability cause him to focus his hatred on the Bhais and endanger his own life. In Harriet's description of the incident with the Bhais, Michael brandishing his Swiss army knife, stern and righteous, is compared to 'Christ among the money-changers' (TC: 332). It is an ironic comment on Michael's role, like the archetypal, incongruous figure of Christ as the innocent victim excluded from society (AC: 42). Yet the character who sees his duty for the Fourth World Movement as 'his whole existence and self-fulfilment' (TC: 293) dies a terrible death at the hands of the Bhais, his fate the opposite to the benefits that Love can create: beauty, peace and kinship (SYM: 71). His death could be seen as Christ-like if it were not that it is futile, without true 'followers' like the faithful Harriet before Crishi's influence.

Harriet's account of her past for the most part captures the stoical acceptance of fate as it portrays her increasing 'self-surrender' to Crishi. Once in a while the narrative holds back the truth or is ambiguous and this happens in the description associated with Michael's death. It is an indirect account of what must have happened to Michael's body. We are left uncertain as to whether Harriet in writing the account is totally unaware of the implications of what she writes, or if it is a conscious act to emphasize the tragedy of Michael's death and Crishi's evil in a narration that is innocent of guile. The account occurs during Harriet's search for the missing Michael the morning after the dinner

party, his quarrel with the Bhais, and his presumed death at their hands later. Harriet records without suspicion the uncommunicativeness of the hotel staff. The narrative continues:

> Kites came swooping down continually to a particular spot on the lawn and pecked at something there; and although they flew off when the bearers descended on them ... next moment they were back. They didn't bother to fly off when I came to see what it was that had attracted them. I found it was just a mess of what I presumed to be gnawed chicken bones, flung there by careless guests. There were more kites behind the hedge where the makeshift clay ovens had been set up last night, and where Michael had gone to get food for the Bhais after our conversation together.
>
> (TC: 356)

The attention paid to what in effect appears to be an unimportant episode and the ambivalent suggestiveness of parts of the narrative - 'They didn't bother to fly off when I came ...', 'of what I presumed to be gnawed chicken bones', 'more kites behind the hedge ... when Michael had gone to get food for the Bhais' - makes it almost a certainty that Michael's body was never cremated but left to be picked at by the kites. Michael dies not only as the mythic sacrificial victim in the demonic tearing apart of his body but the horror of his death finds expression in the uncertainty of motive behind the narrative. Whether Harriet is innocent or with stoical resignation exposes her own and Crishi's guilt, the demonic influence of the rogue-alazon and the absurdity of human aspiration and idealism is unequivocally shown. The horror of Michael's death is further increased by other revelations: the Rawul and the Rani Bai know of Michael's death but refuse to help (TC: 350); Michael dies while Harriet and Crishi 'were [still] having a good time with each other'; and Harriet's vehement contradiction of the jeweller's insistence that it was Crishi who organized matters after the so-called skirmish and Michael's 'superficial flesh wound' (TC: 358-359).

Crishi is the tyrant-leader of Three Continents. It is in connection with Crishi that vestiges of Hindu concepts form part of the

moral framework of the novel. His name is a Westernized corruption of the god *Krishna*, with overtones of 'Christ' in it thus suggesting in the diabolical figure of the twins' 'real thing' an image of the modern gods who capture the idealism and aspirations of seekers of fulfilment. Crishi's physical beauty and his inexhaustible energy (TC: 162; 305), particularly for lovemaking, echo that of the god *Krishna*, most famous for the way he attracted the milkmaids with his looks, his flute playing and his amorous ways. Harriet herself thinks of this when she sits all alone in her London flat obsessed with sexual longing for him (TC: 168). Like the god *Krishna*, Crishi 'always' cheerful and charming but always in a hurry, teases the women who long for him, 'hiding himself from them, just showing a glimpse of himself every now and again to keep them in line' (TC: 168). Except with the Rani Bai and her daughters, Crishi's relationships with the women are sexual, a final emphasis on the theme of sexual enslavement so important in Jhabvala's last four novels: Anna Sultan the newspaper correspondent becomes his lover (TC: 256), Renée is ready to commit suicide should Crishi leave her (TC: 364-365), there is a possibility that the hippy Ursula is pregnant with Crishi's baby (TC: 18) and his first wife committed suicide because Crishi had abandoned her (TC: 285).

In the demonic human world of the last two phases of the ironic mythos, the 'demonic erotic relation becomes a fierce destructive passion that works against loyalty or frustrates the one who possesses it' (AC: 149). Thus the confident, fearless Anna Sultan is completely overwhelmed by Crishi's sexual power and later abandonment after she has contributed her share towards publicity for the movement. The demonic parody of marriage may take among other forms, that of incest (AC: 149): the profane relationship between Crishi and Renée may be seen as incestuous for he is supposed to be the adopted son of Renée and the Rawul. There is a further sense of the unnatural in the way Renée seeing the financial

benefits of the match, acts as go-between and proposes marriage to Harriet on behalf of her lover Crishi. Amidst all this, Harriet the major pharmakos lover is like the love-smitten milkmaids, confident in her love for *Krishna* and teased by the god into thinking he is making love only to her. Harriet chooses to accept Crishi's sexuality and his exploitation of other women seeing his relationship with her as something stronger and more meaningful than any of the other liaisons.

Further fluid echoes of Platonic thought are associated with the Crishi-Harriet relationship. Harriet's worship of Crishi's physical beauty and the latter's remark about her boyish figure (TC: 113; 140) are reminiscent of the Eros Socrates speaks of in the early part of his speech in The Symposium. The Crishi-Harriet relationship is not the sexual procreative love, the lowest but still valuable kind of love Socrates mentions. Harriet considers a baby 'superfluous', a 'hindrance between us and everything we did together' (TC: 315). Neither is the relationship one that brings about 'spiritual parenthood' for the exchange of ideas and knowledge consists mainly of the lies Crishi feeds Harriet. The relationship is one of sensual gratification: for Harriet, an end in itself, for Crishi a step towards more sublime heights of material power. If Michael is seen to at least transcend his early physical delight in Crishi's beauty, Harriet's sexual madness remains to the end. So deep is Crishi's sexual dominion over her that in narrating the episode of her first sexual encounter with Crishi she records:

> It was long, long, long ago - in another world - but it is very easy for me to remember.
>
> (TC: 114)

The twins' fondness for the word 'neti' and the significance of the word in Hindu thought, particularly in Upanishad philosophy, highlights Crishi's unique qualities. In *Upanishad* thought, *Brahman* is the Ultimate Principle; so complex, diverse and unexplainable is the idea of *Brahman*

that 'seeking to know *Brahman* is like a man seeking to know himself, forgetting that the self he seeks to know is the self that is doing the seeking' (Organ 1974: 109). Thus the only way to think and speak of the formless *Brahman* is the way of negativity, '*neti, neti*', ('not this, not that', 'inadequate, inadequate'). *Brahman* is '*neti, neti*' because the expression possesses all qualities and embraces all contradictions. Since *Brahman* is no thing the only positive, devout way to talk of it is that it is 'not this, not that'; every attribute applied to *Brahman*, must be eliminated by the *Upanishadic* 'neti, neti': 'It is not coarse, not fine not short, not long not glowing like fire ....' (Organ 1974: 256).(5) 'Neti' to the twins simply means anything that is phoney, not acceptable, not real. Crishi is 'Om', and not neti, just as their life at Propinquity, the interim period at Delhi (before Dhoka) are 'neti'. The truth however is that Crishi is just as 'neti' as these things. The mystery that surrounds Crishi, his past, his age, his real name, his activities in the night when he disappears, the scars on his body and his plans for the future, particularly in relation to Harriet make him a kind of demonic god-like figure as equivocal, as mysterious as *Brahman* and as deserving of '*neti, neti*' in an ironic sense. Just as *Brahman* is often described in the negative, *Achala* (immovable), *Aja* (unborn), *Akshara* (imperishable) so too Crishi is a demonic *Anadi* (without beginning) and *Avachya* (indescribe) (Walker 1968 vol. 1: 393). Ironically too Dhoka where Crishi will eventually gain complete control over Harriet is the place the twins think they can devote themselves to real work since it is 'the source and fountainhead ... where everything would be refreshed and restored' (TC: 300) where it is 'not neti but high and pure' (TC: 317).

The initial accord between the twins and their mutual beloved, Crishi, ends as Michael discerns the cracks in the facade of the Movement and Harriet falls increasingly under Crishi's power. The gradual separation highlights Harriet's sexual vulnerability and Michael's

idealism for 'a new world based on everything that is best in previous worlds' (TC: 84). These two facets of the twins, one as fair and ascetic, the other dark and passionate present echoes of Plato's myth of the human Soul. The soul, is a charioteer with two horses, one black, wanton and rebellious and the other white, 'upright and clean-limbed'. When the charioteer sees the vision of the loved one it needs all his strength and the help of the white horse to restrain the lusty black horse from pulling them along to approach the lover and make 'mention of the sweetness of physical love' (PHA: 62). Eventually the charioteer is successful in controlling the black horse who abandons his lustful ways so that 'at last it comes about that the soul of the lover waits upon his beloved in reverence and awe' (PHA: 63). The most ironic aspect, of Harriet and Michael's 'vision of beauty' in loving Crishi is that the beloved is unworthy, unable to reciprocate, with love, the twins' 'reverence and awe'. In another way the twins are echoes of the divided nature of man's soul: Michael's idealistic, spiritual nature parallels the obedient, 'upright and clean-limbed' white horse whose head points upwards; Harriet's destructive, unreasonable passion for Crishi is the black horse's heedless, headlong advance towards the 'vision of the beloved'. In Plato's story, lustful appetite is subdued for mutual love to operate; in the twins' story ideals are overcome by passion. For Harriet there is no abandoning of the black horse's 'lustful ways'. The 'memory of absolute beauty' is denied Michael and Harriet as she indulges only in 'monstrous wrongdoing' (PHA: 62). Meaning and coherence elude Michael as seeker of Truth and Harriet as seeker of love and happiness for within the novel's Platonic framework the twins are hampered at the start with misdirected love. The crucial basis for the true lover of The Symposium and the Phaedrus is clear:

> Plato finds in the emotion of love directed aright the key to the whole quest of the philosopher; truth is to be attained by a partnership of two like-minded people, based perhaps on the

> first instance on physical attraction, but soon leaving this behind in the common pursuit of the beauty not of this world which is ultimately to be identified with the Form of Good and which gives meaning and coherence to the whole of reality.
>
> (Introd. PHA; [trans.] Hamilton 1973: 8)

Thus the lover who is 'the real thing' brings about all that is 'neti'. The elaborate wedding ritual develops to the awful reality of Harriet's loneliness and sexual longing in London. The 'joy and passion' of Michael's quest turns to disillusionment and anger at the 'sleazy smuggling activities' and the vulgar image-making.

If the idea of '*neti, neti*' is applicable ironically to Crishi, it is appropriate in a non-ironic sense, to describe the flawed narrator's account. It shows Harriet's victimization but the narrator makes few direct comments on Crishi's tyranny; it repeatedly mentions the intense lovemaking but descriptions of these, compared to the wealth of detail of other incidents, are brief with hints and innuendoes of the great passion. Crishi's (dubious) account of his first wife's suicide ends, as do many of Crishi's accounts to Harriet with sexual activity that effectively closes further discussion on an important matter. Here Harriet writes of Crishi 'kissing me in some nice spot' and the paragraph ends with 'Crishi's voice was muffled as he was kissing me again in the same spot' (TC: 306). In a later occasion after Harriet arrives in Dhoka the sexual nature of the reunion is implied in 'Well, I had a very nice bath - he made it a playful occasion' (TC: 371). The ambivalence lies not in the shifts of viewpoint of various protagonists as is usual with Jhabvala's works, but with constant shifts in the narrator's feelings and attitudes of the narrator, presenting us with a narrative that poses questions about meaning and coherence, love and goodness.

For the most part the text exposes the consequences of Harriet's self-delusion and sexual intoxication. In this respect the narrative matches well the main emphases of fifth phase irony. The text makes no attempt to be 'moral', it is 'generalized' and 'less melioristic and more

stoical and resigned' in determinedly showing example on example of the relentless turning of the wheel of fortune. Harriet herself expresses a stoicism not unlike that expressed in the example Frye gives for fifth-phase irony 'Other people got through things; maybe I can' (AC: 237-238). The ambivalence of the narrative then is part of a stoic attempt at self-therapy.

One example of the turning of the wheel of fortune as Harriet submits to Crishi is her reaction to the rough manner Michael deals with Anna Sultan when he struggles with her, to get her gun. This is Harriet's reaction then:

> It was the second time I had seen Michael in action - the first time had been with Nicholas in the gallery - and I was impressed with him. I mean, the way he was so decisive and in a completely unreflective way, although he was by nature such a deeply reflective person.
>
> (TC: 270)

The reference to 'the first time' with Nicholas is when Michael viciously and repeatedly kicks Nicholas (a partner at the London art gallery which serves as a front for the smuggling racket). At that time Harriet notes that Michael, unlike Crishi needed to go through 'a long course of self-justification (TC: 238). That Harriet should now admire Michael for being what he is not, unreflective and uncontrolled, reflects her worship of Crishi for Michael's behaviour is now more like Crishi's.

In the same way that she accepts the matter of Crishi's imprisonments, the death of his wife, Harriet rationalizes on the Renée-Crishi relationship and the nightly ménage á trois in their bedroom:

> By the third time, it had become for me if not natural then not as unnatural as that first time; that burning-with-shame sensation also subsided, for what shame could there be when everything was in the dark?
>
> (TC: 216)

Together with these self-incriminating accounts of the past are admissions, oblique comments and unconscious signals given out by an older, more aware, even suffering Harriet. The hint of unhappy resignation in 'A lot of time has passed and what has happened has happened' (TC: 12) is less explicit than the following confession:

> [At] that time I loved Crishi in such a way that I wasn't capable of keeping back one ounce of myself but wanted to give myself completely for him: my will, my intelligence, my understanding, everything I was. I'm not saying I'm not guilty but only stating the reason why.
>
> (TC: 328)

On a more poignant level is another kind of revelation - that of Harriet's unconscious longing for the earlier less complicated American life she has given up for Crishi. The particular incident occurs when she receives a phone call from the embassy enquiring about the report lodged by Sonya on Michael's disappearance:

> I kept him talking for a while ... I wanted time to think; and also to readjust myself to the difference between that mild voice - the things that were in it! The ski lodge in the winter, the carved pumpkins at Halloween, the drive to Vermont to see the leaves turn - and the distant disembodied dearly beloved Crishi still tingling in my ear.
>
> (TC: 361-362)

The nostalgia for a way of life she has left behind and the intensity of a more immediate kind of love placed together in this example provide one of the few examples of a Harriet still able, despite her obsession with Crishi to think with fondness of a time past. As such it is one of the few touching glimpses of Harriet that the text provides.

The closing chapter brings together the lover and the indifferent, exploitative beloved, the alazon and the tyrant-leader and emphasizes for the last time the degree of confusion and misery Harriet suffers in a concluding narrative that shifts between awareness, fear and helplessness. The setting echoes with omens of potential danger in the raucous, drunken

celebrating of the Bhais (the same people who have presumably killed Michael) and in Crishi's reminder of the sacrificial death of faithful women of the Rawul's ancestors who had immolated themselves (TC: 379-380). The discrepancy between Dhoka as the fountainhead of the movement the place where the 'Rawul had looked at and absorbed the sky until it entered his eyes and made his mind soar' and the reality of its isolation and dangers is accentuated in such details. It is captured in the thoughts Harriet records: 'We drove through utter darkness ... it seemed to me our whole journey had been like that ....' (TC: 369).

Images of waste and abandonment abound. There is a 'wasted garden ... dried and dead', the palace is 'entirely derelict' 'everywhere it was the same, complete and utter ruin, emptiness and desolation'. Crishi's smuggling activities have left in all the rooms 'everywhere only gaps and wounds, where some salable object had been'. The celebrations for Harriet's birthday are provided by drunk and violent Bhais. Harriet's writing of a more convincing suicide note (from the one concocted by Crishi with misspelt words and different handwriting) from Michael, takes place in 'a space between the dome and the crenellated parapet' where there is no breeze and 'is as still as in a still room'. It is a symbolic grave-like setting for the final verification of Michael's death and Harriet's total surrender. It is the final ironic end for the seekers of a love which is meant to be 'a life-transforming miracle .... a magical change of perspective that opens up new horizons' (Vlastos 1984: 38).

On the dark view of life portrayed in Three Continents and its ambivalent ending Jhabvala informs her interviewer Laura Shapiro:

> Most of my novels do end on a deep note of pessimism. Shadows seem to be closing in.
>
> (quoted in Sucher 1989: 206)

The ending records Harriet's grief but shows her so submissive to Crishi's will in covering up her twin's murder that she too has died to goodness.

Discrepancies in Crishi's story are accepted, for example Michael taking pills to kill himself when 'I knew it couldn't be because Michael never had any pills, not as much as an aspirin; he wouldn't touch them on principle' (TC: 381). Harriet produces a suicide note better than the one concocted by Crishi, reproducing Michael's handwriting, emphasizing his disappointment with life. It is a farewell letter that will convince 'friend Pritchett and all those clever lawyers' what Crishi needs to be sure of, that Harriet should be sole heir of the Wishwell fortune. Harriet is here both victim and criminal; the 'shadows that seem to be closing in' on her find their fullest expression in the disturbing ambivalence of the novel's concluding lines:

> I wrote with ease - I mean, it came easily to me because I knew it was what Michael felt; but at the same time I was writing I was crying because it wasn't what I - I, Harriet - believed at all; how could I, and especially with Crishi sitting there beside me. At one point he told me to copy the end part of Michael's note and I did so, correcting "apoint" and "inheritence," for Michael's spelling was always perfect. In order to see to write, I had to bend my head close to the lamp, which made my hair fall over either side of my face like a curtain. Every now and again Crishi lifted the strands on one side to kiss my cheek, murmuring to encourage and comfort me; and to please him and also in gratitude for his concern, I tried to smile, though I was crying too. My tears fell on the paper, and when I wiped them off they smudged the writing, but Crishi said that was all right, for they appeared to be not mine but Michael's tears.
>
> (TC: 383-384)

The extract shows Harriet's complete bondage to Crishi. Just as her hair falls over either side of her face as she bends to write the letter, a small but symbolic sign of Harriet's ignorance of the enormity of her submission to Crishi's evil, so also Harriet draws a 'curtain' across the glaring fact of the bogus misspelt suicide note. She mentions Michael's perfect spelling but registers no reaction at all. Instead it is to Crishi's physical presence that she reacts to: she feels love, loyalty and gratitude for kisses, caresses and solicitous concern. The last line records her grief for the death of goodness, but it also affirms the

triumph of the demonic Crishi who is able to utilize even Harriet's tears of mourning for his own ends.

This scene depicts experience 'with the point of epiphany closed up'. Although Harriet has made her choice and opted for Crishi in the face of so many inconsistencies in his story of Michael's death, she is also a woman torn between the love for her twin, alter ego and other-half Michael, and the physical and emotional need for Crishi. Harriet's situation again echoes that of Plato's charioteer with the white horse aiming aloft and the black one plunging downwards. The implication of this image is that a person is not simple and unidirectional. In the tears she sheds and the wilful blindness and moral inertia, Harriet is 'a divided being' a 'radical equivocation' an argument with herself. She is torn between 'impulses of self-affirmation and self-negation, self-love and self-hatred' (Norton and Kille 1971: 112).

As mentioned earlier the words 'Propinquity', 'Family, and 'The Rawul's Kingdom' are ironic signals of the discrepancy between image and reality. There is no hope of closeness and connectedness whether in the flamboyant lifestyle of Propinquity, the ephemeral family togetherness and festivities Sonya clings to so desperately, or the world of peace and harmony that transcends all political and man-made boundaries. In <u>In Search of Love and Beauty</u>, despite the desperate unending round of seeking, there is still a sense of the vigour and variety of American life in the larger-than-life characters and aspirations of Louise and Leo and the attractive, independent, adventurous younger characters like Jeff and Stephanie. <u>Three Continents</u> is peopled by mediocre victims and self-indulgent or cruel exploiters and predators. There is the feeling that the good and strong belong to history and this is located in the accounts of the twins' ancestors (TC: 82-83). As a novel written after more than ten years residence in America, the portrayal of her third adopted country is as pessimistic as the portrayal of India in <u>A New Dominion</u> and as

uncompromisingly bleak as the image of India in the last section of Three Continents.

In an ironic comment on her future, Harriet thinks of India, 'and in particular of Dhoka' as 'a sort of absolute destination from which there was no looking back' (TC: 266). After Dhoka the way is open for Crishi to control the Wishwell millions. Dhoka is supposed to be a mythical kingdom where 'the gods had come down to be men; the country not only of [the Rawul's] own birth but that of all humanity; the cradle of civilization' (TC: 253). In reality the Rawul, a character based on the countless Eastern religious teachers, and swamis in America of the sixties and seventies, is a self-indulgent, easily-manipulated leader. He cashes in on reports of his divinity even though the movement is aimed at creating 'heaven on earth' rather than concerned with 'the other world'.(6) Dhoka is a 'gruesome', 'backward' place which according to the Rani Bai 'no civilized person ... can stand' (TC: 181). If India is not the dark, ancient Dhoka it is the 'upholstered prison' of a plush Delhi hotel where 'the temperature was carefully controlled, creating the stifled, pampered atmosphere of a place closed off not only against heat and cold but everything else coming in from outside' (TC: 284). Thus India is no more the personally-felt experience of the comedies and comic ironies of Jhabvala's early and middle phases in India. The India of Three Continents is the culmination of a gradual distancing from her previous adopted country, one that began with that other dark irony of the quest for spiritual truth and happiness, A New Dominion. In her last novel India recedes into a generalized, stereotype image of a land of darkness, difficulties and dangerous passions (Rubin 1987: 270). It appears that the passage from India and immersion in the American milieu has caused Jhabvala to forget the vitality and vigour of India that she delighted in in her early comedies and ironies. Ironically however the darker image of

India fits in well with the dark irony of Frye's fifth-phase for both show the operation of the natural cycle of the wheel of experience.

If the image of India in Three Continents is one closer to that written by Anglo-Indians - India as a threatening force for the unwary foreigner (Parry 1972: 3; Islam 1979: 5-9), the America of Three Continents offers no better alternative. When Harriet persuades Michael to stay on in India, she reminds him of their life in America:

> "You mean go back to Propinquity; take back the house on the island; you mean go on fighting with mother and despising Manton and everything else you've always run away from. All that damn neti.
>
> (TC: 334)

The apathetic relationships and isolation of In Search of Love and Beauty reappear without the glimmer of hope and refinement Love offers in the earlier novel. Sexual indulgences of irresponsible parents and adults, broken family links and the twins' hopeless search for 'something better than what we had' are features of a society 'coming apart at the seams': seeking to counter the erosion of love and belonging through alternative patterns of living (Bellah 1976: 333-339).

As only the second novel in a new yet comforting milieu that evokes memories of a happy German childhood the bleak picture of America (with that of India) makes Three Continents a disturbing last novel. It portrays the meaninglessness of human ideals, actions and calculations, a nihilism that is the inevitable product of the alienated ironic writer whose writing has consistently and progressively shown a darkening of the ironic perspective. Three Continents may perhaps be seen as a myth of twentieth-century life with characters who are representative types, a story of false gods and demonic tyrants and of pharmakos seekers, worshippers and idealists. It sets a background of materialistic values, sexual excesses, self-interest and indulgence where love, marriage and ideals are 'neti' and totally debased. Crishi is the demonic tyrant-

leader, the anti-Christ figure, the man with the 'many-sided personality' who manipulates his apostles (the word Michael uses to describe the followers of the Fourth World). These are a collection mainly of 'poor, sick creatures', 'indistinguishable and dispensable' (TC: 172), representative of the lonely isolated wanderers of modern life. There is Paul, Crishi's most faithful apostle-courier abused, drug-ridden, wracked by disease, a horrific parallel to Christ's chief apostle (TC: 365-366). Opposed to Crishi and the lesser exploiters like the Rawul, Renée and the Rani Bai are the forces for potential good, Harriet and Michael. A victim of sexual enslavement Harriet ignores the portents of her future - the women abandoned by Crishi and most importantly, Michael's death. Michael, Christ-like in his vision and in being 'the perfectly innocent victim excluded from society' (AC: 42) is merely a heap of bones that kites have fed off. Sonya's rejoicing over the birth of a new baby boy for Manton and Barbara with 'the same pointy ears Michael has', 'very very blond baby like you were, Michael' (TC: 316) leaves us with a sense of foreboding that a new cycle of hopeless quests, of seeking and exploitation begins again. Over and above all this is the anti-heroine, the flawed narrator Harriet and her text. The unreliable fictional eye-witness is 'the sophisticated product of an empirical and ironical age' (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 264), Harriet's flawed account, a mix of motives and attitudes towards Crishi and Michael, a statement of unfulfilled ideals, submission and muted anger is representative of the ironist's view of life as totally absurd.

At the sixth and final phase of irony, we are brought to 'the point of demonic epiphany, the dark tower and prison of endless pain ... the goal of the quest that isn't there' (AC: 239). Frye points out however that on the other side of the 'blasted world of repulsiveness and idiocy, a world without pity and without hope, satire begins again' (TC: 238-239). There is a possibility therefore that the next Jhabvala novel whether it

is set wholly in America or not will have all the provocative irony and comedy of the Indian novels.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Ruth Jhabvala's current writing constitutes an ironic examination of the Western preoccupation with the right to individual happiness and freedom of passion, and the pursuit of this in feckless, indifferent, exploitative and destructive lovers. Her seekers are predominantly women and homosexual men. The move to New York in 1975, the media access to her and her collaboration with the Merchant-Ivory film company made her more well-known among the American reading public. By then Jhabvala was already established as literary interpreter of the Indian scene. Her ironic studies of Indians and Westerners in India, oriented to a Western readership, were well-received by a Western audience as fascinated with fiction about modern India as those to do with the Raj. In Search of Love and Beauty proved a distinctive first Western novel for it seemed to herald a break with her Indian past yet continued her preoccupation with the search for love and happiness by taking the quest out of India to an American setting. Yet the quest theme of Three Continents, her second novel set in America of the sixties, necessitated a backward glance to India, the birthplace of so many of the religious teachers who brought their brand of Hindu spirituality to America then. Although India may be distanced, or subjected to a shift in perspective from a view of India as complex, beautiful and diverse to a place suggestive of all that is dark, alien and unsafe for the Westerner, it seems almost certain that Jhabvala's novels will perhaps never completely let go of India. India, where for twenty-five years she probably experienced some of her happiest and most difficult times, will appear in one way or another in her future writing.

One of the main concerns of this thesis has been to emphasize that despite the location of her fiction in India, the humour and wit of her writing and the sense of variety and glorious unexpectedness of Indian

life, Jhabvala has always held the ironic, distanced stand of the outsider-writer. Critic Robert Towers maintains that for all her Polish-Jewish background and Indian novels, Jhabvala has always seemed in temperament and practice to be a British novelist of a very distinctive kind. For her wit, 'chilling accuracy of insight', 'macabre comedy' of impulsive, self-indulgent lives up to 'any amount of nonsense', precision of style and an ironic viewpoint 'not known for exceptional kindness to most of her creations', Jhabvala is placed together with Nancy Mitford, Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch and Barbara Pym (Towers 1983: 3).

The fact of the Western readership of Jhabvala's Indian novels, her return to the Western world and the two Western novels validate the comparison of her writing with that of Iris Murdoch, a novelist with whom she shares links of background, literary concerns and an ironic, pessimistic view of life. It places Jhabvala in the context that one suspects she would like to be considered, that is within the Western contemporary scene rather than as a writer of new literatures in English or studied together with Western writers who write about India. As a study that has looked at Jhabvala as a writer whose ironic viewpoint operates within a philosophical framework it would be most appropriate to establish some kind of link between Jhabvala and Murdoch a moralist writer for whom philosophy, especially Platonic and Eastern thought, is central.

Although older by eight years to Jhabvala (Murdoch was born in 1919), the two writers belong to the same contemporary scene. When Jhabvala, then twelve, and her family emigrated to England, Murdoch had started her university education at Oxford. Jhabvala's first novel was published in 1955 when she was twenty-eight whilst Murdoch put off publication of her work until she was thirty-seven when Under the Net was published in 1954. Their formative years were thus spent in post-war England. For Murdoch, Irish by birth, the social changes in England after the war would have been noted, particularly the policies of a welfare

state and the slight blurring of the division of classes between the privileged and the working people. Jhabvala, displaced to a greater extent than Murdoch as a refugee of the Holocaust from Germany, would have felt the changes in a new country even more. Both however would have felt disillusionment, a sense of disenchantment, of not belonging or not wanting to belong fully to the country or the changed and difficult times. For Jhabvala at least marriage and beginning life in India in 1951 was a kind of liberation that gave her back the adolescence she had missed (Jack 1980: 32-33; Weinraub 1983: 112) and inspired her to write To Whom She Will soon after.

Both writers have strong academic backgrounds which have consistently influenced their writing: Murdoch in philosophy and the classics and Jhabvala with English literature and the ideals of order, fact and exactitude in life and art of eighteenth century literature, her area of specialization. The drive towards the mythic is expressed early in Murdoch's writing. There are elements of myth in The Flight of the Enchanter (1956), The Bell (1958), The Unicorn (1963), The Sea, The Sea (1978). The use of symbols or emblems is part of Murdoch's enjoyment of invention and fabulation before resolving the story as she says 'by working in the opposite direction, making something happen which doesn't belong to the world of the magic' (Haffenden 1983: 34). In Jhabvala, the mythic, and the symbolic and emblematic significance of places, situations and relationships may be seen in the later ironies. They are part of the movement of the ironic mythos towards myth when actions and events are distanced and represent the steady turning of the wheel of fate and characters and incidents often become inversions of myth.

Both novelists find inspiration in Plato's The Symposium though in different ways. Murdoch sees morality as fundamental to human life and her novels are quests for a system of values that is relative and shifting and in which virtue is difficult to define and discover. Murdoch utilizes

Plato by showing in novels like The Bell, The Sacred and Profane Love Machine (1974) and The Philosopher's Pupil (1982) how sexual love of the beautiful can lead to the Good, to aesthetic and moral worth. Plato distinguished between lower and upper Eros with lower Eros as the link between the sensible world and that of transcendence. Many of Murdoch's seekers of the Good sublimate their sexuality, rather than dissociating themselves from it. As a 'modern non-transcendental Platonist'(Borklund 1974: 913) she is concerned to show the search for knowledge, for the Good, but whereas Plato believed that this search could lead to a transcendental knowledge of the Ultimate, of a Knowledge outside the material world, Murdoch feels that human life has no external point.

Although the theme of the Platonic seekers of wisdom dominates Murdoch's work, the philosophical ideas that frame her writing are varied, intricate and often obscure. Apart from Platonic virtue and the idea of Eros as fundamental energy with possibilities for good or bad, they range from ideas on individual freedom, the artist's obligations, on knowledge and love, the ethical life, the role of art in society, Hindu and Buddhist concepts of enlightenment and paranormal powers. Her non-fictional writing such as Sartre, Romantic Rationalist (1953), The Sovereignty of Good (1970) and The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists (1977) are like manifestos on the relation of literature to art, of literature and philosophy and the nature and unity of freedom, knowledge and virtue.

Unlike Murdoch, there are no explicit references to Plato in Jhabvala's non-fictional writing; indeed all such writing explores the complex relationship between the author and India. The Platonic framework that is discerned in the workings of Jhabvala's ironic narrative is built specifically on In Search of Love and Beauty, its title and textual allusions to Platonic philosophy on love and the quest for true Beauty or Knowledge. Besides these, there are echoes, parallels and resonances of

Platonic thought, for example the preoccupation with transcendence and/or erotic love, in Jhabvala's last four novels. Jhabvala puts Platonic thought to ironic use in a consistent way beginning with A New Dominion through to Three Continents. Where Murdoch shows the attainment of the Good, of virtue and knowledge against the model of the true seeker of Wisdom who transcends or sublimates sexuality, Jhabvala is concerned to show how distant sex is from love, erotic passion from a movement towards the sublime.

By comparison, the Hindu philosophical framework in Jhabvala's fiction is explicit and generally clear and unproblematic for the general non-initiated reader. Jhabvala's use of Hindu ideals and concepts are those of the initiated-outsider and perceptive novelist who selects and utilizes them to accommodate her irony. It is a frame of reference that caters to a Western readership offering simultaneously an insight into the norms and ideal of the country and the erosion of these ideals as seen from the ironic viewpoint of a foreign writer.

Thus the traditional and moral frame of Hindu ideas and concepts is a pervasive presence in the Indian novels, used like the Platonic ideas, for ironic effect to highlight delusions and lack of self-knowledge, to underscore foolishness, crime and absurdity. In Murdoch's writing allusions to Eastern spirituality are present only in specific novels. These are in connection usually with minor but important characters who are Murdoch's 'good' people, peripheral, often ineffectual, but exercising watch over the more profane activities of the other characters. In The Sea, The Sea, the Buddhist James, the narrator's cousin has paranormal powers learnt from the east. In Bruno's Dream (1969) Nigel Boase, practises a kind of yoga which allows his consciousness to leave his body to watch over those he loves. In the same novel at a more complex level is the use of the legend of Parvati, the consort of *Shiva* who accompanies the meditating *Shiva* into the wilderness and consequently becomes as

unkempt as he is in that condition. Married to Miles whose first wife was an Indian called Parvati, Diana enters into a similar state of suffering with her attachment to the dying Bruno and the losing of her Western consciousness - her ego (Hall 1969: 439-441).

Murdoch's view of the 'accidental' nature of our life - subject to 'accidents' and also an existence with no significance beyond itself - gives her novels their comic vision. Yet her novels are deeply pessimistic because those who aspire after the Good, or the concept of goodness itself are often shown to be ineffectual and passive, leaving the world in the hands of evil-doers or subject to mindless wrong-doing. This pessimism is shared by Jhabvala whose 'good' and aware characters are often ineffective, rejected by the strong and deluded, or alone, sometimes through self-imposed isolation or separation.

The novels of both writers may be seen to express what John Holloway describes as 'minimal affirmation', a contemporary response to existing conditions. In the context of post-war depression and universal uncertainty these are writings which engage with the difficulties of the times yet also posit this belief:

> [There] can be located some limited area of experience that has value, or some modest and unambitious conception of goodness which can as it were be insured against undermining.
>
> (Holloway 1983: 82-83)

Both women create characters shadowed by appalling loneliness, confusion and misery but a tiny bit of optimism, of 'minimal affirmation' is present. In Jhabvala's case this affirmation, particularly centring on love, is seen in all her novels, except the last one Three Continents. Bruno's Dream ends on this note, of Bruno 'being kind and good and ... nothing else matters at all'. In In Search of Love and Beauty, Louise dies in a transport of pain and joy. Jhabvala suggests that although life

offers little enough those who live it, especially with dignity, humility and love have some worth.

Of the two writers there is a stronger sense of affirmation in Murdoch than in Jhabvala. Disasters happen to Murdoch's characters but they do not end tragically. Monty in The Sacred and Profane Love Machine (1974) suffering from ennui born of the death of his wife, their failed marriage and dissatisfaction with his literary career, tells a friend, Harriet:

> Don't play it so tragically. Life is absurd and mostly comic. Where comedy fails what we have is misery, not tragedy.
>
> (Murdoch 1975: 130)

On the whole the world Jhabvala creates is a darker one than Murdoch's. Murdoch is a conscious moralist who uses her art to create and to transmit moral judgement. She combines realistic characters with fabulous plots and incidents, often using symbols to highlight hidden desires and hates. The philosophical and moral view of giving full attention to other individuals is extended to the novel. For Murdoch the chief human virtue, love, is the exercise of 'the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real' (quoted in Borklund 1974: 913). Murdoch's good characters are those who show attentive respect for others as separate, precious and unique beings.

Like ghosts of the past the old systems of thought exert their influence over Murdoch's fiction and she is reluctant, despite her pessimism, to let nihilism overtake the Platonic debate which is active and of continuing vitality for her. As Jhabvala's novels progress, human life is shown to be increasingly limited and absurd. The old systems whether Platonic or Hindu seem increasingly inapplicable and irrelevant; with nothing left to take their place there is only nihilism left in Three Continents.

Jhabvala's art is a more personally-centred one. The sharp satire, the dark irony that exposes abuse and exploitation of the weak and marginal, the authorial ambivalence towards the Indian and Western characters in her later Indian novels and last two novels, and the ambiguous non-resolution of every one of her novels are manifestations of the ironic viewpoint of the alienated, uprooted writer. Jhabvala's characters belong to the ironic mode; created by their creator's ironic viewpoint they have little of the choices Murdoch allows for some of her characters, of 'facing up to the truth and living with a more realistic view of oneself and other people' (quoted in Kenyon 1988: 16).

In Bruno's Dream Diana becomes increasingly closer to and caring of Bruno and in being so accepts her sister Lisa's love for Danby, the man Diana herself had thought could take Miles' place. The thoughts of the character who is headed towards the Good is presented thus:

> She tried to think about herself but there seemed to be nothing there. Things can't matter very much, she thought, because one isn't anything. Yet one loves people, this matters.
> .....
> Her resentment against Miles, against Lisa, against Danby had utterly gone away. They will flourish and you will watch them kindly as if, you were watching children.
>
> (Murdoch 1970: 310)

Very few of Jhabvala's lovers possess or reach up to 'disinterested, rational love' like Diana's. Louise in In Search of Love and Beauty, Raymond and Charlotte in A New Dominion, Sarla Devi in Get Ready for Battle, Uma in Esmond in India are exceptions. Jhabvala's outlook is basically a more sceptical one. Most of her women protagonists are lovers in the sense of human love at its most elementary level - sometimes not even Plato's 'procreative love' but one that is ultimately self-motivated, utilitarian and narcissistic. Love as the spiritualization of sensuality occurs but only rarely in Jhabvala's fiction. Her lovers are caught in an inward-looking, closed and private quest for love and beauty. Each is

full of the self in an involuntary, unconscious way, yet is so psychologically disturbed and morally inert that she can no longer offer the alertness, the intelligence to break away. Few of Jhabvala's protagonists unlike Murdoch, can live and love like the gods. When they do, it is only in parody of their mythic counterparts, with their delusions, follies and crimes exposed. Murdoch's statement that we are 'largely mechanical creatures, the slaves of relentlessly strong selfish forces the nature of which we scarcely comprehend', constantly fabricating 'a falsifying veil which partially conceals the world' (quoted in Borklund 1974: 913) is as relevant a description of her protagonists as it is of Jhabvala's.

It was in the sixties and certainly in the seventies that women writers stressed on gender differences in their work. Both Jhabvala and Murdoch are not overtly feminist in their writing, Murdoch's fondness for male narrators is well-known and they are presented as flawed and deluded because of the illusions they have built as 'anxiety-ridden animals', not because they are male. Both writers show ambivalence towards many of their female characters. In Murdoch especially, woman is 'other', whereas the men represent intellect and conscience. On the whole there is little emphasis on female friendships or sustaining relationships. Jhabvala's seekers hampered by lack of self-knowledge and fantasies of self-hood are also women alone or at odds with others equally 'blinded by self'. However, for both writers, especially in the later works, there is feminist awareness in their writing. This is seen in the portrayal of relationships characterized by emotional and sexual exploitation of women, and the depiction of a strong sense of polarization and discontinuity between the male and female experiences of life. Apart from increased insights into women, there is also the emphasis on the women's fulfilment of the quest for spiritual knowledge or the Good. In Murdoch one of the best examples is the portrayal of Anne in Nuns and Soldiers (1980) who,

despite the personal failure of an unspoken love for the Count, lives a life of truth, selflessness and pursuit of the Good.

With Jhabvala, Heat and Dust is her most female-centred text, one that posits affirmations in the female quest for connectedness and spiritual fulfilment, through nurturing relationships. Like Anne in Nuns and Soldiers, the unnamed narrator of Heat and Dust possesses an emotional and physical toughness that allows her the confidence to seek her own sense of spiritual knowledge. A feminist reading of Jhabvala's fiction has been made by Laurie Sucher who concentrates on the last four novels. She sees Jhabvala's writing as an exploration, told from a woman's point of view of the 'sexual politics of passion'. The novels are seen as tragi-comedies of self-deception and the loss or shedding of illusions. Jhabvala is not merely a chronicler of the comical exploitation of naïve women by men who are 'super-phallic, demonic, almost anti-human' but a woman novelist who paints the desire of her protagonists 'to be known' as an essential human quality, without which one is 'alienated from oneself' (Sucher 1989: 7).

An area that offers potential for study especially from the feminist perspective is the large collection of short stories where women are not merely shown as quarrelsome, childish, petty and self-centred (as in the Indian novels) or thwarted, deluded seekers. Admittedly such characters do occur but there are a considerable number of protagonists of feminist-centred texts. In 'The Housewife' (1971) Shakuntala opts for music and *jouissance* when she subverts patriachal expectations (focussed in her aunt) and leaves her family for the emotional and physical fulfilment in her gifted, drug-taking music teacher. In 'The Man with the Dog' (1968), one of the few short stories to portray fulfilled profane love, an Indian woman writes of her long-standing relationship with the expatriate Boekelman despite her childrens' disapproval. Towards the end of the story the woman writes:

> None of my children even comes to stay with me now. I know they are sad and disappointed with me. They want me to be what an old widowed mother should be, devoted entirely to prayer and self-sacrifice; I too know that it is the only state fitting to this last stage of life which I have now reached. But that great all-devouring love that I should have for God, I have for B.
>
> (ASC: 203)

The open-endedness of many of these short stories suggests the female capacity for change and transcendence. Short stories that portray women within a patriarchal society and expectations (generally earlier works) may be studied together with these more positive studies of female experience, within the context of Jhabvala's response to women's writing and priorities in the late sixties and seventies. Many of these woman-centred short stories are reminiscent of the works of Katherine Mansfield. There are similarities in the subdued ironic tone, the themes of loneliness and victimization within the family and the technical sophistication. The open-endedness of these stories is another similarity. Both are adept at recording nuances of feeling in the interior monologues that are externalized by the use of the third-person, the shifts of perspectives between characters and the discreet narrative voice that sometimes hints at the conclusion of the story and sometimes leaves it ambiguous and open-ended. The stories that come to mind are Jhabvala's 'A Spiritual Call', 'Rose Petals', 'Bombay', 'In the Mountains' and Mansfield's 'The Woman at the Store', 'Miss Brill', 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' and 'The Garden Party'.

Murdoch analyses human longing for the Good through partial failures and flawed characters, like Stuart in <u>The Good Apprentice</u> (1985). The equivalent to this 'favourite' character of Murdoch's is the outsider-figure in Jhabvala's fiction - the refugee, the Jewish immigrant, the homosexual. These are usually the eirons, the self-deprecating or self-aware protagonists and the strategies they develop for survival are those

acquired by the alert in a world that Murdoch sees as 'aimless, chancy and huge'. Modes of estrangement in Jhabvala's writing may be studied in relation to writers, possibly Third World and Commonwealth writers, who write of alienation and expatriation like V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai and the very talented Bharati Mukherjee.

The general movement in Jhabvala's fiction from a wry optimism to one of wry pessimism, sharp satire and the dark ironic view of human motives and rewards in an alien, absurd world, is paralleled by a narrative method that moves from straightforward strategies for overt irony to the covert irony of multiple viewpoints and narrators and to the disturbing first person narrative of Three Continents in which there is authorial disparity between Harriet the confessor, Harriet the ironic narrator, and finally Harriet the defender of her actions. A detailed and in-depth study of the workings of Jhabvala's irony, that is her narrative method, could be made with the focus on the method's devices, variations and thematic effects. For this thesis, some attention has been given to form, that is to the narrative method and appraisal of the text as the vehicle for Jhabvala's ideas and concerns. Perhaps a study, with the emphasis on form, the primary text, the 'presentation' rather than what is 'being presented', may be undertaken so that generalizations may be made of Jhabvala's narrative method. Thematic generalization of Jhabvala's oeuvre would be more convincing if based on a detailed analysis of the narrative method which serves to constitute it.

Permanently settled now in America, Jhabvala seems set to continue her long collaboration with Merchant-Ivory. No study has yet been carried out on the films for which Jhabvala has collaborated with James Ivory and Ismail Merchant. These consist of screenplay adaptations on Henry James novels and Jean Rhys' Quartet, of her own novels, and screenplays for stories set in India and in America. There are a number of areas worthy of research. There is the sophistication of style and narrative

techniques that are results of her experience in filming. Screenplay-writing has refined Jhabvala's ability to convey economically and effectively each word, action and gesture. A study of Jhabvala's narrative method could very well incorporate the cinematic innovations of the last four novels. The three-partner collaboration and close friendship of nearly thirty years is itself interesting and affords possibilities in the study of the major interests and concerns of Merchant Ivory and how these relate to Jhabvala's writing. There is the MIP preoccupation with the subject of patronage, the propensity of people to take up others, the search for true friendship and 'the classic MIP heroine, floating between a number of worlds which are not her own, floating and surviving' (Pym 1983: 94-95).

There is considerable variation in critical assessments of Jhabvala's work. C.P. Snow, V.S. Pritchett, Angus Wilson regard her as one of the finest writers today (Agarwal 1978: 24). Eunice de Souza finds a 'monotonous sameness in a writing that does not 'go beyond the familiar emotional reactions' to the Indian society scene of a hypercritical Westerner (de Souza 1978: 219). John Updike sees her as Proust-like in the way she shows human love as always finding an unworthy object but sees her as unlike Proust for offering 'no redemption' (Updike 1983: 85). David Rubin regards Jhabvala's writing as adversely affected by her personal history of constant uprootings'; her later novels present no point of view except 'nihilism reflected through deadened sensibilities' (Rubin 1986: 101). Yasmine Gooneratne in her sensitive study praises Jhabvala's work for, among other things, its 'richly varied ironic style' her precise and acute depiction of manners, her work as sincere, artistic expression of her process of understanding life and coming to terms with it (Gooneratne 1983: 1-30).

The variety of assessments and even the unfavourable comments on her latest novel Three Continents, prove that as a major contemporary novelist

all is well in Jhabvala's world. The variety of responses reflects also the ironic writer's versatility and dissembling nature. Like the eiron and the dissembler par excellence Socrates, Jhabvala is both compassionate and critical, sympathetic and honest. Some readers and critics find Jhabvala's beautifully controlled ironic analyses of human nature and her art of understatement either too clinically critical, mystifying or pretentious. In 1987, Jhabvala told an interviewer (Laura Shapiro) that the novel is an 'on going process of integration'. Then in response to the interviewer's query on Jhabvala's use of Harriet Wishwell as narrator for the entire novel, she replied:

> You have to try all the time to conquer new territories.
>
> (quoted in Sucher 1989: 206)

These statements capture much of Jhabvala's honesty and her commitment to her art, one that attempts the 'process of integration' on both the artistic and personal levels. If her novels portray, not without sympathy and sadness, a world of general irony in human silliness, depravity and absurdity, they are drawn from her own past and experience. If her fiction portrays a dark world, her thematic preoccupations are ones that depict honestly a world she knows best.

NOTES

Chapter One

1 In 1979 in her address on receiving the Neil Gunn Award, reprinted in Blackwoods Magazine (see Bibliography), Jhabvala speaks for the first time of her early years in Germany. She mentions her reluctance to talk about the years between 1933 and 1939 when she was between the ages six to twelve. 'They should have been my most formative years, and may be they were, I don't know. Together with the early happy German-Jewish bourgeois family years - 1927 to 1933 - they should be that profound well of memory and experience (childhood and ancestral) from which as a writer I should have drawn. I never have. I have never written about those years. To tell you the truth, until today I've never mentioned them. Never spoken about them to anyone. I don't know why not. I do know that they are the beginning of my disinheritance - the way they are for other writers of their inheritance' (Jhabvala quoted in Pym 1983: 26).

2. To an interviewer's question on her reaction to getting the Booker Prize, Jhabvala answered: 'Its extremely gratifying to have got this prize but it doesn't make any difference to oneself ... I don't think I shall go on writing in my present view - the Booker Prize might mark a conclusion of my present career' (May 1975: 57).

3. A number of uncollected short stories set in India and written after the move to America are:

'A Very Special Fate', 'Expiation', 'Farid and Farida',

See Select Bibliography and Abbreviations.

4. This distrust and even dislike for the new 'Sahibs', the Westernized Indians, who are indifferent to the social inequalities of life in India is mentioned in the introduction 'Myself in India' of An Experience of India.

In 'Open City, Letter from Delhi' (1964), (See Select Bibliography and Abbreviations), Jhabvala writes of the social activities of Delhi during the winter season, when tourists arrive, and the deceptive 'openness' of Delhi which hides the reality of suffering and pain from the tourists and mutes the conscience of those capable of doing something about it.

5. Jhabvala's comment on her solitary life 'alone in my room with the blinds drawn and the air conditioner on' (AEI: 16) is used by Eunice de Souza as the title of her highly critical essay on Jhabvala's writing (de Souza 1978: 219-224).

6. See No. 4.

Another non-fiction article Jhabvala wrote is 'Moonlight, Jasmine and Rickets', (1975). (See Select Bibliography).

7. Srinivasa Iyengar, the noted Indian scholar admits to giving the term 'Indo-Anglian' general currency by adopting it as a title for his first book on the subject, Indo-Anglian Literature (1943). (Iyengar 1973: 3).

8. A number of bibliographical materials cite Jhabvala within the Indo-Anglian context.

See A. Singh, R. Verma and I. Joshi (eds.), 1981. Indian Literature in English 1827-1979: A Guide to Information Sources. Gale Research Company: Detroit.

B.K. Gupta, 1973. India in English Fiction 1800-1970. The Scacerow Press Inc: Metuchan, New Jersey.

Jhabvala is also seen as a writer in the context of writing in English in the Third World and the Commonwealth Context.

See Ralph J. Crane, 1985. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: A Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources, Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol. XX No. 1, pp. 171-203.

S.A. Narayan, 1988. 'Annual Bibliographical Entry for India', Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol. XXIII, 2, pp. 75-99.

Sriniva Iyengar (See Note 1) considers Jhabvala's work together with that of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Attia Hossein and Santhe Rama Rau in a chapter titled 'The Women Novelists' in his book.

R.S. Singh considers Jhabvala as one of India's finest writers and devotes a chapter to her titled 'Ironic Vision of a Social Realist: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala' (Singh 1977: 149-163).

9. See Yasmine Gooneratne 1976. 'Traditional Elements in the Fiction of Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', World Literature Written in English, 15, 1, pp. 121-134.

Haydn Moore Williams, 1972. 'R.K. Narayan and R. Prawer Jhabvala: Two Interpreters of Modern India, Literature East and West, 16, pp. 1136-1154.

10. V.S. Naipaul's praise of Jhabvala's work would merely be seen by Indians as his support of a writer whose work vindicates his own dark portrayals of India in his two non-fictional studies.

See V.S. Naipaul, 1964. An Area of Darkness. Deutsch: London.
V.S. Naipaul, 1977. India, A Wounded Civilization. Deutsch: London.

11. To an interviewer's question 'Do you see any social role for the novelist in India?' Jhabvala's answer was:

> No, I don't think that is the role of the novelist. You'd write very poor novels if you tried to write social documents in India. (Rutherford and Peterson 1976: 375)

12. Haydn Moore Williams sees one of Jhabvala's themes in her portrayal of Delhi life as the conflict between the spirituality of the Yogi and the maternal priorities and commercialism of Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt in the broad sense of the word (Williams 1969: 81-90).

13. See No. 9.

Gooneratne sees the three writers as drawing from the rich store of Indian and Hindu myth and tradition for their novels.

14. The Bhasmasura myth tells of the birth of a demon who is given a boon by Siva: he is able to burn to ashes anybody on whose head he places his hand. He creates fear and suffering with this power. Finally the god Vishnu in the form of Mohina the dancer destroys him when, intoxicated by

her dance, the demon is caused to place his hands on his own head (Mani 1975, Puranic Encyclopaedia s.v. "Bhasmasura").

15. *Purana* refers to a class of Sanskrit writings giving a legendary account of ancient times. There are eighteen *puranas* and the god Vishnu predominates in many of these.

16. Allen J. Greenberger divides imperial literature into three divisions:

The Era of Confidence - 1880-1910
The Era of Doubt - 1910-1935
The Era of Melancholy - 1935-1960

(Greenberger 1969: 5)

17. Shamsul Islam draws our attention to the fact that Bhupal Singh's Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction lists over a thousand titles of works on India which covers only the period to the mid 1930s (Islam 1979: 106).

Anglo-Indian writing is dominated by the Imperial theme and the Raj; modern writers continue to write about the Raj days and some of these are listed below.

Anglo-Indian writing includes:

i) The romances by writers like F.E.F. Penny (died 1939), Maud Diver (1867-1945) and I.A.R. Wylie (1885-1959)

ii) novels by writers like Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), Flora Annie Steele (1847-1929), Alice Perrin (1867-1934) and Edward Thompson (1886-1946). These are generally more compassionate studies of India and Anglo-Indian life, supported by the writers personal knowledge of life in Anglo-India.

iii) Anglo-Indian romances written by modern/contemporary writers like Katherine Gordon Peacock in Jeopardy (Bk IV of her Peacock Quartet) (1982), Elizabeth de Guise Dance of the Peacocks (1988).

iv) Novels of the imperial theme by modern writers: Phillip Mason The Island of Chamba (1950), Patterns of Dominance (1970); John Masters (1914-1983) The Deceivers (1952), Bhowani Junction (1954); J.G. Farrell (1935-1979) The Siege of Krishnapur (1973), The Hill Station (unfinished) (1981).

v) Fiction on post-Independence and modern India include those by Paul Scott Staying On (1977), Helen Forrester The Money Lender of Shahpur (1987), Russell Lucas Evenings at Mongini's and Other Stories (1990).

18. In early Anglo-Indian writing, especially before the 1920s a recurrent image of Indians is that of sensual, lascivious natives who threatened not only the morality of the Anglo-Indians but also very unity. Kipling in his tales advocates the desirability of keeping to one's race, caste or creed: love-affairs between Englishmen and Indian girls always ended tragically.

19. Godden's Breakfast with the Nikolides (1965) looks at inter-racial relations but is somewhat different from her other Indian stories in that the setting is urban and the protagonist is a man, Charles Pool, an agricultural expert, who runs a government farm in a town in East Bengal. His problems include a wife (recently arrived from Europe with their two children) who detests Indians and life in India.

20. Shamsul Islam notes that for the British the decadent, spendthrift rajas fitted in well with the Anglo-Indian stereotype of the unreliable native. Educated Bengalis were regarded as disruptive elements and consequently the Bengali *babu* an example of the hybrid Indian became another Anglo-Indian stereotype, the stock figure for ridicule (Islam 1979: 7).

Chapter Two

1. The full title of Jhabvala's thesis reads 'The Short Story in England, 1700-1750: A Contribution to the Study of Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century.' It covers topics like the The Short Tale (based on old romantic tales of shipwrecks, slaves); Translations; The Letter; The Short Story in the Novel; Periodicals and Chapbooks. The short story flourished in the periodical publications and Addison (1677-1719) and Steele (1672-1729) the latter the most prolific Tatler and Spectator writer, breathed life into the periodical character. Working with old material and experimenting and developing new subject-matter and methods of narration (for example the epistolary novel) the short story writers, a distinctive figure being Richardson (1689-1761), are seen as preparing the gound for later novelists. The short story form of 1700-1750 is seen as an 'interim type of fiction', a half-way house to the later novels.

Chapter Three

1. *The Panchatantra*, according to some scholars of Indo-European language, is the oldest collection of Indian fables surviving. The original text is believed to have been written about 200 BC. It is a collection of animal fables recited by a Brahmin to three princes on how to deal with people and rule over their subjects in peace and harmony. It has been translated into various languages; the Persian version was later translated into several European languages (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 177-178).

2. A Dharma-sastra is a law book. The three principal topics of all law-books are rules of conduct, judicature and penance (Garrett 1973).

3. The Code of Manu or The Laws of Manu (AD 100-300) is a dharma-sastra, believed to be the first systematic treatment of Hindu Law and the precursor of all other dharma-sastra or brahmanical legal manuals. Manu (?600 BC-AD 300?,) called the 'Law-giver', is its supposed author. The Code lays down social, moral and ethical precepts for the guidance of the people and formulates rules for the observance of rites and ceremonies. Book IV of the Code relates to domestic law, the rules governing women (generally to their detriment), husbands and marriage; parents and children, inheritance, death,funerals (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 27-28).

4. In 'The Story of the Female Mouse' the sage Yadnyavalkya emphasizes the importance of careful selection of prospective marriage partners:

> A wise man should give his daughter in marriage
> To someone who fulfils the following seven requirements
> Good family, good character, the capability to look after a family
> Education, wealth, physical fitness and suitable age (Panchatantra, [trans.] Chandiramani 1970: 152).

5. Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) was a philosopher-statesman and one of India's famous sons. He was Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford in 1936-1952 and he served on many academic organizations at home and overseas. He was President of the Republic of India from 1962-1967. His publications include: The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy (1920); The Philosophy of the Upanishads (1924, 2nd edition 1935); The Hindu View of Life (1927); A Source Book of Indian Philosophy (1957).

6. It is interesting to note that the Hindu physiological system, like the Greek is based on the theory of humours called in Sanskrit, *dosha*. In ayurvedic (a science of life), the three-dosha is linked with theories of the guna. The three vital fluxes or humours are bile, wind and phlegm. Vayu (wind) is rajasic (energizing). The word *dosha* also signifies fault or defect and disharmony and ill-health follow when one of the doshas is malfunctioning or disproportionate (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 466). Lalaji's excessive preooccupation with making money, his *rajas* may be seen as the dominant influence of *vayu* which often prevails in advanced age.

7. Kalidasa (AD? 350-600?) is considered the greatest of the Sanskrit dramatists most famous for his poetic drama Shakuntala, with a theme borrowed from the Mahabharata. This specific reference in The Nature of Passion is from Shakuntala when the sage Kanva sends Shakuntala off, with his blessings, to her husband King Dushyanta's palace. (Walker 1968 vol. 1: 339).

8. A similar sentiment is expressed in the *Padma Purana*:

> Be a husband aged, unfirm, deformed, a frequenter of places of ill-repute, living in open sin with other women, and destitute of

honour; still a wife should regard him as a god (quoted in Walker, 1968 vol. 2: 605).

9. The importance of the *asrama* for the householder is seen in this quote from the *Mahabharata*: 'The four different modes of life were at one time weighed in the balance. The wise have said that when domesticity was placed on one scale, it required the three others to be placed on the other scale for balancing it' (*Mahabharata*: 12,23 quoted in Organ 1974: 205).

10. Vivekenanda's real name was Narendrath Datta (1963-1902). A Hindu spiritual leader and reformer, he attempted to combine Indian spirituality with Western material progress, maintaining that the two supplemented and complemented one another. His Absolute was man's own higher self; to labour for the benefit of mankind was the noblest endeavour. He lectured all over the world, giving the Americans especially an idealized version of Hinduism, judicously adjusting his expositions to their sentiments. Like Clarissa in 'A Backward Place' who comes to India after having read about the life of Vivekenanda (BP: 92) there is every possibility that Jhabvala was familiar with his writing.

11. *Git Govinda* (song of the cowherd) is a famous erotic poem by the court poet Jayadeva, written about the twelfth century, in Bengali. It recounts the early life and loves of Krishna and the gopis, or milkmaids and concentrates particularly on the amorous love between Krishna and his favourite Radha. It consists of a series of dramatic lyrics intended to be sung. (See Walker 1968 vol. 1: 500-502).

12. In the film version of The Householder (1963), the story begins with the country wedding where Prem consoles his friend the groom with an account, told in flashbacks, of the early days of his own marriage. The film was praised for its touching, humorous detailing of the specifics of everyday Indian life and the shading of the lives of Indu and Prem: 'her sudden playfulness, his no less childish exasperation; his sententiousness, her silent acquiescence' suggested 'a modest universality' (Pym 1983: 34).

Chapter Four

1. Browning's 'Caliban upon Setebos' 1864) records Caliban's obsession and torment at the god-demon worshipped by his mother Sycorax. Caliban's construction of the god is in terms of his own image; he sees Setebos as a capricious, cruel god who created the world through envy and torments it through pride and malice. Setebos' world is without love or feeling.

2. Kalidasa (AD? 350-600?) is considered one of the greatest of the Sanskrit dramatists. His *Shakuntala* is praised for its dramatic skill and poetic diction, 'expressing tender and passionate sentiments with gentleness and moderation, so lacking in most Indian literary works' (Walker 1968 vol. 1: 510).

Mirashi and Navlekar stress that Kalidasa took the Mahabharata story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala and shaped it anew in the treatment of incidents and the delineation of character. In the original, Dushyanta and Shakuntala are 'actuated by sordid selfishness'. Passion marks their first meeting and Shakuntala exacts promises from the King for royal recognition for herself and her son. Kalidasa touches up the characters to make them worthy hero and heroine of a drama with religious overtones (Mirashi and Navlekar 1969: 293).

Shakuntala was first translated into English by Sir William Jones in 1789 titled 'Sacontala or the Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama'. It was greatly admired by Goethe.

See also Note (7) of Chapter 3.

3. The stories of Rama and Sita appear in the *Ramayana*' (Romance of Rama) which, together with the other Sanskrit epic, Mahabharata contains legends based on ancient vernacula bardic tradition. 'The Ramayana' is believed to have been written not before 300 BC. Sita was Rama's only wife, accompanying him in exile, the personification of conjugal fidelity, purity and tenderness. Though carried away to Lanka by Rawana, Sita kept herself chaste by concentrating her heart on Rama throughout her imprisonment. Although able to prove her purity by undergoing an ordeal, Rama banishes Sita in deference to public opinion of her unfaithfulness. At a hermitage Sita gives birth to Rama's two sons. The family is reunited when the sons come of age but Sita, after protesting her innocence, asks to be received by the earth which swallows her up (Walker 1968 vol. 2: 278-281).

4. See Note (3) of Chapter 3.

5. The expression 'Not Angles but Angels' is attributed to Pope Gregory I (540-604) one of the greatest of the early popes who sent Saint Augustine to England. Bede's Ecclesiastical History (11.1) tells the story of Gregory I who, on seeing blond, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon boys for sale in the slave-market at Rome, remarked 'Not Angli but Angeli', if they were Christians. Esmond's use, 'quite out of context' of the expression 'Angels not Angles' is an expression of his longing for the moderation of English life and a son unconnected with the country and life he has grown to detest. There is perhaps something of the dilettante too in Esmond even in his misery (Drabble 1985: 416).

6. There are aspects of Shakuntala in the character of Nalini in a later short story 'A Course of English Studies' (AEI: 106-136). Nalini, eager to fall in love, does so with her lecturer Norman Greaves. She sees him as a brilliant, suffering literary intellectual tormented by a dull wife and domesticity. He has no illusions about his lack of ambition. The affair comes to its inevitable end and Nalini writing home to her mother suggests she goes home because 'I don't think the teaching here is all that good ...'

7. Jivanmukti means liberation in life. The jivanmukta is a kind of superman for the goal of life, liberation from the cycle of action and rebirths, can be reached on this earth. The jivanmukta, he who achieves individual liberation becomes the symbolic apex of the society, often a guru, or guru-figure (Organ 1974: 20-36).

Atmansiddhi on the other hand is an on-going process of human perfecting; the atransiddha, the Perfected Man is an ideal to be approximated, it remains unattainable.

For Jhabvala's protagonists, particularly her spiritually-aware eirons, caught in the ironic mode of bondage and delusions and always subject to ironic scrutiny, the ideal of human perfecting seems more realistic than the portrayal of *jivanmukta*.

8. In 1955, the Hindu Marriage Act made divorce possible. The Widow Remarriage Act allowed Indian widows to remarry in 1932.

9. B.S. Miller's translation of this particular injunction reads:

> Impartial to joy and suffering,
> gain and loss, victory and defeat,
> arm yourself for the battle,
> lest you fall into evil.
>
> (BG: 2, V38, p. 34)

10. Relinquishment means that action is to be performed, but without concern for the fruit. In the *Gita* it is defined as 'relinquishing all fruit of action' in contrast with renunciation (sannyasa) which is defined in terms of surrendering all actions to Krishna; being without hate or desire; and giving up actions based on desire. These two terms are sometimes conflated. Disciplined action and relinquishment are spiritually more effective than renunciation. Sarla Devi, with her concern for the injustices suffered by the poor and peripheral of Delhi society yet withdrawing from the life with Gulzari Lal, practises relinquishment (key words, BG, [trans.] Miller: 167-168).

11. The story of the youthful Krishna and his sporting gopis is recorded in the '*Bhagavata Purana*' in its tenth book. As Govinda the handsome young cowherd, Krishna was able to satisfy all his female adorers simultaneously, each one believing that he loved her most by the simple expedient of multiplying his body, a device used by the sage Saubhari before him (Walker 1968 vol. 1: 400-401).

12. N.C. Chaudhri refers to Kalidasa's epic poem 'Juma-Sambhava' on the marriage of Siva and Parvati and to Jayadeva's Gita Govinda a twelfth-century bhakti text of the Vaishvana cult celebrating the love of Krishna and Radha (Chaudhri 1979: 220-227; 276-280).

13. The textual traditions contain few injunctions for husbandly behaviour beyond stating that a man must marry to procure sons who are needed for his salvation. One passage from Manu is critical, however, stipulating that men should treat their women well or women will destroy them:

> Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law who desire (their own welfare) .... The houses on which female relations, not being duly honoured, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic.
>
> (quoted in Jacobson and Wadley 1977: 123)

14. In the 'Introduction: Myself in India' Jhabvala writes:

> Here perhaps less than anywhere else is it possible to believe

> that this world, this life, is all there is for us, and the temptation to write it off and substitute something more satisfying becomes overwhelming .... the fact remains that the eyes of the spirit *are* turned elsewhere, and it really is true that God seems more present in India than in other places. Every morning I wake up at 3 a.m. to the sound of someone pouring out his spirit in devotional song .... On the banks of the river there are figures in meditation .... There are *ashrams* full of little old half-starved widows who skip and dance about ... because they are Krishna's milkmaids.
>
> (AEI: 18)

Of Indian music she writes:

> I love listening to Indian devotional songs. They seem pure like water drawn from a well; and the emotions they express are both beautiful and easy to understand because the imagery they express is so human .... I feel soothed when I hear such songs and all my discontentment falls away.
>
> (AEI: 18-19)

15. There are only two serene, contented Indian housewives in Jhavala's novels. Other than Shanti of Backward Place there is Shanta, Om's wife in The Nature of Passion. Significantly they share similar names.

16. In Backward Place Jaykar angrily turns on Bal and his friends at one of their coffee-house sessions, accusing them of wasting their time in 'hair-brained schemes' of little use for a 'starving country'. They are 'loafers', 'worthless nothings who sit here chattering like old fishwives while the country is falling in ruins about their ears' (BP: 101).

Jaykar possibly speaks for Jhabvala's own feelings on the matter which are most clearly stated in a 1974 interview with Ramlal Agarwal.

> R.A. It is also said that you present only one aspect of Indian society. It is true there is a great deal of pointlessness and emptiness in rich urban society. But there are Indians who are working quietly and unpretentiously. You have stayed in India for over two decades. Haven't you met such people? If yes, why don't they figure in your work?
>
> R.J. Yes, I know Indians who are working quietly and unpretentiously - quite a few of them - but would you say they are the most representative of India and the Indian life today? And doesn't a writer always take the most representative aspect of his subject - that which will bring out its principal, its most striking feature of Indian life today - Indians working quietly and unpretentiously? Would you really?
>
> (Agarwal 1974: 35)

17. Nautch (Urdu nach: dancing) girls were professional dancers who besides dancing acted and performed at exhibitions. Anglo-Indian non-fiction writing refers to these 'nautches' or tinselled girls who performed for the Maharajas, princes and rich Indians and their Anglo-Indian guests.

18. In 'Introduction: Myself in India' Jhabvala describes the Indian sky:

> And over all this there is a sky of enormous proportion - so much larger than the earth on which you live, and often so incredibly beautiful, an unflawed unearthly blue by day, all

> shining with stars at night, that it is difficult to believe that something grand and wonderful beyond the bounds of human comprehension does not emanate from there (AEI: 16).

Even in her darkest novel Three Continents, the beauty of the Indian sky is acknowledged by the author in the 'most terrible moment' of Harriet Wishwell's life (TC: 381).

19. Etta's permanently-drawn curtains are like those of her own creator who in 'Introduction: Myself in India' refers to the need to be alone in her room 'with the blinds drawn and the air-conditioner on' (AEI: 16). It is however a defensive action. Like Etta, Jhabvala knows 'You cannot shut out India. It is there pulsing outside the door. It comes in' (Moorehead 1975: 16).

20. The characters of Kishan Kumar in Backward Place, Suraj in 'A Star and Two Girls' and Vikram in the film Bombay Talkie (1970) offer some light on Jhabvala's attitude to the Indian movie industry and the effect of films and film stars on the public. The film Shakespeare Wallah (1965) highlights the coarsening effect of cheap film and movie personalities on the theatre taste of the Indian public (Gooneratne 1983: 174).

The cinema is virtually the only form of entertainment known to the vast majority of India's six hundred million people living in the villages and small towns. The comment made by Raj Kapoor, one of India's famous actors and directors, aptly supports this:

> They want songs, dances, slap-stick, good fights, religion, nice-looking boys making love to nice-looking girls - the lot. We give them what they want. We sell them dreams, they buy them.
>
> (quoted in Singh 1977: 36)

As part of the Indian film industry, Kishan Kumar and Suraj 'sell dreams' to the likes of Bal.

Chapter Five

1. Laura Shapiro comments that Jhabvala was in India when the 'first wave of Western truth seekers began to wash up in Delhi in the sixties'. Of the situation Jhabvala comments:

> Over and over again, I saw people coming there with their hearts and minds wide open ... Some spiritual leader would fasten himself on them and exploit them. I met the Maharishi when he had just started - he had this very black beard and very black hair and wily eyes. And lots of cosmic laughter. He had already begun to travel, and a couple of ageing European women had come back with him. They were radiant. They'd found a new world.
>
> (Shapiro 1987: M3)

2. V.S. Pritchett sees Lee and Margaret as modern, darker versions of the questing figures of Miss Quested and Mrs. Moore who visit India with a desire to learn and be enriched. Raymond, 'the sensitive and spinsterly English aesthetic and inquirer, is 'another Fielding plus unconscious homosexuality'. Prichett sees Gopi as 'in some ways a budding ill-educated, up-to-date version of Dr. Aziz' (Pritchett 1973: 106).

3. This deliberate distancing has brought about a rather catching advertisement for New Dominion in 'The New Yorker'. Jhabvala is described as:

> An Oriental Jane Austen ... an Indian Checkov ... a Polish Forster ... and still unique (16 June 1983: 111).

4. Khushwant Singh the writer (b. 1915) in the course of his career as journalist has interviewed many Yogis, gurus, swamijis and those who deal with the occult. There appear to be common characteristics shared by these men most of which Swamiji of New Dominion and Jhabvala's other guru figures possess. Most of them are energetic and youthful-looking although they are no longer young. Their eyes, for example those of Dadaji, the Man of Miracles,have a 'hypnotic spell-binding power' (Singh (ed.) 1977: 72). They command faith and devotion, and the Gurudev Muktanande of Vajreshwari is worshipped by thousands as God incarnate (Singh (ed.) 1977: 80). Some exude an aura of humility and friendship, others like the yogi Swami Dhirendra Brahnachari are aggressive, business-like, ambitious, an entrepreneur in the religious trade, making frequent television appearances, writing books and like Swamiji of New Dominion with plans for the extension of his Yoga Ashram. Inevitably most are attended to by ardent women believers and the Swami Dhirendra, although a celibate has 'a bevy of young, attractive lady secretaries and instructors on his staff (Singh (ed.) 1977: 5).

5. See Note (11) of Chapter 4.

A version from well-known writers Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita reads thus:

> Now when Krishna saw that the gopis were dying for love he appeared again in their midst, so that they were glad, for he said to them: This I have done to try you. How can I now reward you enough? For like a *vairagi* leaving his home and giving his heart to God, you have come to me. Then Krishna played and danced with the *gopis*. He made his appearance manifold and danced with them in a ring, so that each one thought that Krishna himself was by her side and held her hand; so they whirled round in a circle, the dark Krishna and fair Braj girls, like a gold and sapphire necklace (Coomaraswamy and Nivedita (nd): 235).

6. The pattern of union-separation-reunion is an archetypal motif in the religious and secular literature of love. In the *Git Govinda*, this centres round the love sport of Krishna and his favourite consort Radha - the erotic love play, the separation with Radha's love-in-separation, and the reunion, love-in-enjoyment. Separation is valued because it makes the lover-devotee realize the need for refuge in, and union with Krishna (Siegel 1978: 159-161).

7. In an interview with Anna Rutherford and Kirsten Peterson Jhabvala talks of the influence of film in her work with particular reference to Heat and Dust:

> I went a lot into the editing room so I know how you cut a film. It's shot in a certain order and you bring all that into the editing room and shuffle it about to bring out the stronger scenes, to offset them, to use counterpoint. For instance you always have an outdoor scene and then you have to have an indoor one to set it off. Well I've been doing the same things with the last two novels especially with the last one, which I cut about. I wrote it rather differently from the others. I wrote great blocks of present time and then great blocks of 1923. Then afterwards I cut them up and put them together to set each other off.
>
> (Rutherford and Peterson 1976: 377)

8. The interweaving of past and present in Heat and Dust is also seen in the film Autobiography of a Princess (the screenplay was published just before Heat and Dust). The story is about an Indian princesse's subjective, sentimental view of her father the late Prince of Jodhpur and of the Raj days in India. The setting is the Princesse's London flat where she entertains her late father's secretary to the (annual) event of afternoon tea, memories in the form of flashbacks of her past life and films of the activities her father used to enjoy, pig-sticking, tiger-hunting and formal occasions. These glimpses into the past are counterpointed with the secretary's own, less idyllic thoughts of the Westerner's experience in India.

9. See Richard Cronin, 1986 'The Hill of Devi and Heat and Dust', Essays in Criticism, 36, April, pp. 142-51 for a detailed analysis of the Forsterian echoes in Jhabvala's novel.

10. The Hill of Devi first published in 1953 consists of the journal letters which E.M. Forster wrote during his visits to this small Native State in Central India, first for ten days in 1912-1913, then for six months in 1921 as Private Secretary to the Maharaja. Forster wrote The Hill of Devi as a biographical and autobiographical tribute to the Maharaja of Dewas State Senior, his employer and friend. It is a book of love and loyalty, celebrating friendship with India and Indians and appropriately dedicated to Malcolm Darling, the British friend who had served with the Maharaja before and introduced Forster to him (Heine (ed.) 1983).

In a letter dated April 1st 1921 from the The New Palace, Dewas Senior, Forster writes:

> I have discovered incidentally that £1,000 worth (figure accurate) of electric batteries lie in a room near at hand and will spoil unless fixed promptly. I can't start now on the inside of the palace - two pianos (one a grand), a harmonium, and a dulciphone, all new and all unplayable, their notes sticking and their frames cracked by the dryness. I look into a room - dozens of warped towel-horses ... or a new suite of drawing room chairs with their insides gushing out. I open a

> cupboard near the bath and find it full of teapots ... And so on and so forth.
>
> (Forster 1953: 60)

In Heat and Dust Olivia is brought by the Nawab into 'an underground chamber which seemed to be a kind of store room'. The narrative continues:

> And what stores! There was an immense amount of camera equipment which, though already rusting, did not seem even to have been used.

Apart from 'modern sanitary equipment', an assortment of games, equipment for a hockey team all ordered from Europe, there are two pianos, a grand and an upright. A squirrel Forster mentions in the same letter, finds new life in Heat and Dust: 'a small animal - it looked like a squirrel - came scurrying out [of the grand piano] and ran for its life!' (HD: 86-87).

11. For a detailed analysis of the maternity theme in Heat and Dust see N.S. Pradhan, 1978. 'The Problem of Focus in Jhabvala's Heat and Dust', in Indian Literary Review, 1, No. 1, pp. 15-20.

12. For an interesting feminist approach to female friendship in Heat and Dust see: Elizabeth Abel, 1981. '(E) Merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by women', (Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society, 6(3), Spring 1981, pp. 413-435.

13. The conclusion to the Merchant Ivory Production of Heat and Dust (1983) with screenplay adapted by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, ends on a more optimistic note with Olivia apparently happy in her highland home and Anne confidently headed for the ashram in the Kashmiri mountains. Pym notes tht 'the central mystery of Heat and Dust is how Olivia having left Douglas and having esconced herself in Kashmir cut off from the West, with only, it seems, her piano and occasional visits from her Nawab for company, occupied her mind .... It is characteristic of Merchant Ivory Productions that we are left to make up our own minds' (Pym 1983: 99).

Altogether the sense of the modern seeker actively working out the details of her own story is not emphasized in the film. There are no parallel Baba Firdaus scenes; the Olivia-Nawab visit and sexual union is shown. This is preceded by a scene in which Anne and Inder Lal are in bed together and we learn by way of an over-voice of her calm, philosophical acceptance of her missed period and possible pregnancy.

Chapter Six

1. The rise of issues in the sixties, for example civil rights, antiwar activities, brought disillusionment, tension and violence to American society. The sixties and seventies saw upheaval in religious practises and the growth of religious movements (which included Judeo-Christian theologies, practises of Eastern religions), quasi-religious and social reform movements, deviant cults and anti-establishment ways of life,drug-dominated commune living and the hippy movement. Some of the religious movements had early beginnings overseas like the Unification Church begun by the Rev. Moon Sun Myung in South Korea. By the sixties the Unification Church had centres all over America. Other viable movements very popular with the Americans were yoga-based ones like Transcendental Meditation, led by the Maharishi Yogi, the Divine Light Society of Meher Baba, the Hari Krishna Society. Various self-help groups dedicated to self-realization were popular because they offered therapy and meditative techniques as a relatively short-term basis without demanding intensive changes in life-style (Wuthnow 1988: 151-152, 166). Of the deviant drug-oriented cult movements the most bizarre example is of the Charles Manson 'family' or 'nest' which in 1969 carried out the mass killing of randomly selected victims.

2. Apart from 'Commensurate Happiness' which is discussed in this chapter, Jhabvala has written a number of short stories of Jewish European refugees and the younger members of their family. In 'A Birthday in London' (1963) the older generation is portrayed as sad, stoic survivors whilst the younger generation seems oblivious of the dark memories they share.

'Grandmother' (1980) is the story of a rich widow who in old age suddenly discovers the joys of freedom and friendship with her two (homosexual) adopted sons. By contrast her daughter's life is marked by marital problems.

3. L.E. Sucher suggests the character of Leo Kellerman may be partly built around the figure of popular physiologist Fritz Perls, founder of the Esalen Institute in California, and the Russian mystic Gurdjieff (1872-1949) the subject of Pietr Ouspensky's account 'In Search of the Miraculous' (1927) (Sucher 1989: 172).

Gurdjieff set up the Institute of the Harmonious Development of Man. Members lived a monastic life, ritual exercises and dance were part of the regimen. Gurdjieff's basic assertion was that human life as ordinarily lived is similar to sleep; to transcend the sleeping state required work, but when achieved the individual could reach remarkable levels of vitality and awareness (Encyclopaedia Brittanica. s.v. Gurdjieff).

4. The cult of Tantrism was and is confined to a very limited number of followers. It is esoteric and has three aspects - that which is being presented to the contemporary West is only one aspect, with a dubious reputation even among the Hindus.

The first aspect of Tantric devotion is a course of esoteric self-mortification and gymnastics accompanied by worship of Kali.

The second and third forms have sexual intercourse as part of its practice. The second form practised by devotees of Kali is cruel and cold-blooded and has practically disappeared.

The third form has continued and is most widespread because it is sexual indulgence under the name of religious worship. This practice is called Vamachara - the left-handed or perverse way - and consists of ritual indulgence in the 5 M's, namely *madya* (alcohol), mamsa (meat), matsya (fish), mudra (gestures with the hands) and maithun (coitus) (Chaudhri 1979: 248-250).

5. Roseland was written in 1977, Jhabvala's first major work after her move to America in 1975 when she was not yet ready for a novel but found at the New York ballrooms she visited an inspiring subject for a Merchant-Ivory film. She was moved by the similar stories of displacement and loneliness told by the emigrants and children of emigrants. She noted the 'debilitating excess of empathy they felt for one another', a result of the perfect understanding they had for each other's past'(Pym 1983: 77-78).

Roseland comprises three short stories, the central episode 'The Hustle', is flanked by two others, 'The Waltz' and 'The Peabody'. The Hustle concerns a handsome young man variously claimed by three different women who want him as a cushion against the uncertainties of the future. The other two stories are both concerned with elderly women sentimentalists each of whom has lost her dancing partner (Pym 1983: 76)

Apart from the direct link with Roseland in Regi's frequenting of a dance-hall and the availability of young men like Eric who befriend lonely older women, the film and the novel share a similar concern with the displacement and loneliness of emigrant families and the fight to keep their personalities intact through love and a sense of belonging.

6. In 'A Summer by the Sea' (1979) the relationship between Susie and her husband Boy is similar to that between Marie and Hughie, Natasha and Mark. Susie, like Marie and Natasha, is self-effacing, devoted and content to share her husband with his homosexual lover Hamid, an attractive, sensual half-Indian, an early model of Crishi in Three Continents.

Chapter Seven

1. A rather interesting parallel is suggested between the title of Jhabvala's latest novel and that of one of E.M. Forster's lectures. In November 1959, Forster read a lecture in Milan titled 'Three Countries' where he acknowledged his debt to Italy, England and India for material for his writing particularly in the beautiful scenery the countries offered. Jhabvala in writing Heat and Dust and creating echoes of Forster in her work would most probably have come across this lecture together with the letters and journal entries collected under the title The Hill of Devi. 'Three Countries' might have suggested 'Three Continents' (Heine (ed.) 1983: 289-300).

2. Michael's early fervour over the movement, Harriet's total submission to Crishi, the appeal of violence, are both symptomatic of the influence and control by the leaders of the deviant groups and cults in the sixties on young idealists who were often lonely, affluent and intelligent.

Patty Hearst the American heiress kidnapped by a terrorist group in 1974 was described by her lawyers as 'vascillating' in attitude, with no idea of the gravity of her position (Time 13 Oct. 1975: 27). Abandonment of personal ego to the all-powerful leader, usually through sexual submission was essential (Time 19 Jan. 1970: 36-37).

In the cult wars and anti-cult feelings of the sixties and seventies there were accusations that some of the religious organizations were engaged in illegal activities like brain-washing, immigration fraud, tax evasion, secret military training and stockpiling of weapons, drug abuse and trafficking (Melton 1986: 243).

Jhabvala who met the Maharishi (see Note 1 of Chapter Five) a popular guru of the sixties and seventies, makes use of the social upheavals and spiritual seeking of the sixties and seventies in America as the background for Three Continents.

3. Charles Manson established his colony, his 'family', at a deserted movie-location ranch in California in the late 1960s. He is said to have modelled himself on a fictional character called Valentine Smith who had hypnotic and magical powers. Manson saw a violent black uprising against whites as imminent. To make the whites aware of the approaching disaster he carried out his own executions by sending out his 'family' to do the killings (Time 19 Jan. 1970: 36-37).

4. The diverse new social and religious movements aroused as much enthusiasm as they did suspicion. Ira Friedlander joyously proclaimed:

> A great spiritual energy has been moved to this country and holy men of the East are following it, and, of course, they bring the light within them to become our mirrors. They establish centres or ashram and reconfirm the spiritual centres within themselves. They plant the seeds of inner peace with their divine grace, which remains and nourishes like a good rain that falls on fertile soil, long after the rain has gone the seed, in the soil continues to grow.
>
> (quoted in Melton 1986: 106)

Some of the well-known of these holy men of the East were Swami Sivananda (d. 1963) (Divine Life Society), Meher Baba (d. 1969) (automonous Meter Spiritual Centres), Bhagwan Rajneesh (b. 1931) (Rajneesh Foundation International) Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (b. 1911) (Transcendental Meditation).

5. The quote is taken from the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* 3.8.8 and is here quoted in full:

'It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, not glowing like fire, not adhesive like water, without shadow and without darkness, without air without space, without stickiness, colorless, tasteless, without eye, without ear, without voice,without wind, without energy, without breath, without mouth, without measure, without inside without outside' (quoted in Organ 1974: 257).

6. In the characterization of the Rawul Jhabvala may perhaps have had the more colourful, flamboyant religious leaders in mind. One of these was the Bhagwan Rajneesh who set up the town of Rajneeshpuram in Antelope, Oregan. By 1985, he had a hundred Rolls Royces, most of them given to him by devoted Rajneshees. His movement had its own press and periodicals; opposition against the movement was as much against his wealth as against fears that Rajneeshpuram would start a series of 'cult' towns (Melton 1986: 176-181).

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF REFERENCES

Elizabeth Abel, 1981. '(E)Merging Identites: The Dynamics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by Women', Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 6(3) Spring 1981, pp. 413-435.

Ramlal Agarwal, 1974. 'An Interview with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', Quest, No. 91, 1974, pp. 33-36.

_____, 1976. 'Forster, Jhabvala and Readers', Journal of Indian Writing in English, 3, No. 2, 1976, pp. 25-27.

_____, 1978. 'Two Approaches to Jhabvala', Journal of Indian Writing in English, 5, No. 1, 1978, pp. 24-27.

Bharati Agehananda, 1965. The Tantric Tradition. Rider & Co: London.

John B. Alphonso-Karkala, 1978. 'Literature and National Character in regard to Indo-English Literature'. In Indo-English Literature. (ed.) K. K. Sharma. Vimal Prakashan: Ghaziabad, India.

Shyam Asnani, 1975. 'Jhabvala's Novels - A Thematic Study', Journal of Indian Writing in English, 2, No. 1, 1975, pp. 38-47.

Prem Nath Bazaz, 1975. The Role of the Bhagavad Gita in Indian History. Sterling Publishers PVT Ltd: New Delhi.

Theodore De Bary (ed.), 1958. Sources of Indian Tradition (vol. 1). Columbia University Press: New York.

T. O. Beachcroft, 1968. The Modest Art. Oxford University Press: London.

Robert N. Bellah, 1976. 'New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity'. In The New Religious Consciousness. (eds.) Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Henri Bergson, 1956. 'Laughter'. In Comedy. (ed.) Wylie Sypher. Doubleday Anchor Book: New York.

Simone de Beauvoir, 1987. The Second Sex [1949]. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Bernard Bergonzi, 1970. The Situation of the Novel. Macmillan: London.

The Bhagavad Gita, (trans.)
S. Radhakrishnan, 1948. George Allen Unwin: London.

The Bhagavad Gita, (trans.)
R. C. Zaehner 1969. Oxford University Press: London.

B. Bissoondayal, 1976. India in World Literature. Luzac & Co: London.

Fritz Blackwell (ed.), 1977. Journal of South Asian Literature. (Special Issue on Feminine Sensibility and Characterization in South Asian Literature). Vol. XII, Nos. 3 & 4, Spring-Summer 1977.

_____, 1978. 'Perception of the Guru in the Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', Journal of Indian Writing in English, 5, No. 2, 1978, pp. 6-13.

_____, 1985. 'A European Emigré in India', Asiaweek, 15 Feb. 1985, pp. 44-47.

Wayne Booth, 1961. A Rhetoric of Fiction. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Elmer Borklund, 1972. 'Iris Murdoch'. In Contemporary Novelists. (ed.) James Vinson. St. James Press: London.

Malcolm Bradbury (ed.), 1966. Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays. Prentice Hall Inc: New Jersey.

_____ (ed.), 1973. Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Peter Brooks, 1984. Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative. Clarendon Press. Oxford.

E. K. Brown, 1966. 'Rhythm in E. M. Forster's A Passage to India'. In Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays. (ed.) Malcolm Bradbury. Prentice-Hall: New Jersey.

Anthony Burgess, 1967. The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction. Faber: London.

Ramesh Chadha, 1982. 'Heat and Dust and The Coffer Dams: A Comparative Study', Journal of Indian Writing in English, 10, Nos. 1 & 2, 1982, pp. 24-30.

Nirad C. Chaudhri, 1967. The Continent of Circe. Chatto & Windus: London.

_____, 1979. Hinduism: A Religion to Live By. Chatto & Windus: London.

Carol P. Christ, 1980. Diving Deep and Surfacing. Beacon Press: Boston, Massachusetts.

The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield, (1945). Constable: London.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita, 1967. Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists. Dover Publications Inc: New York.

Margaret Cormack, 1961. The Hindu Woman. Asia Publishing House: London.

Robert W. Corrigan, 1981. Comedy: Meaning and Form. Harper & Row: New York.

Richard Cronin, 1986. 'The Hill of Devi and Heat and Dust', Essays in Criticism, 36, April 1986, pp. 142-159.

Martin Cyril D'Arcy, 1954. The Mind and Heart of Love: Lion and Unicorn, a study in Eros and Agape. Faber and Faber: London.

Robert D. Denham, 1978. Northrop Frye and Critical Method. The Pennyslavania State University Press: London.

M. E. Derrett, 1966. The Modern Indian Novel in English. Université Libre: Brussels.

Anita Desai, 1965. Voices in the City. Orient Paperbacks: New Delhi.

_____, 1981. Fire on the Mountain. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

_____, 1984. In Custody. Heinemann: London.

_____, 1985. Village by the Sea. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

_____, 1988. Baumgartner's Bombay. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Sashi Deshpande, 1988. That Long Silence. Virago Press: London.

Kiran Devendra, 1985. Status and Position of Women in India. Shakti Books: New Delhi.

R. Dharmaratnam, 1986. Hinduism. Percetakan Nathan: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Elizabeth Dipple, 1982. Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit. Methuen & Co: London.

Margaret Drabble (ed.), 1985. The Oxford Companion to English Literature. (Fifth Edn.). Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Phillip Drew, 1970. The Poetry of Browning: A Critical Introduction. Methuen: London.

J. G. Farrell, 1987. Siege of Krishnapur. Flamingo: London.

Elaine Feinstein, 1972. 'Inside India', London Magazine, NS 12, No. 1, 1972, pp. 142-143.

Georg Feuerstein, 1980. The Bhagavad Gita. Arnold-Heinemann (India): New Delhi.

_____, 1981. The Bhagavad-Gita: Yoga of Contemplation and Action. Arnold-Heinemann Humanities Press: New Jersey.

Helen Forrester, 1987. The Money Lenders of Shahpur. Fontana Paperbacks: London.

E. M. Forster, 1936. A Passage to India. [1924]. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth

E. M. Forster, 1953. The Hill of Devi:being letters from Dewas State Senior. Edward Arnold: London.

Northrop Frye, 1974. 'Dickens and the Comedy of Humours'. In Literary Criticism: Idea and Act. (ed.) W. K. Wimsatt. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Charles J. Glicksberg, 1969. The Ironic Vision in Modern Literature. Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague.

Rumer Godden, 1950. Black Narcissus. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

_____, 1963. Kingfishers Catch Fire. Macmillan: London.

_____, 1965. Breakfast with the Nikolides. Macmillan: London.

_____, 1967. The River. Macmillan: London.

Rumer Godden & Jon Godden, 1966. Two Under the Indian Sun. Macmillan: London.

Yasmine Gooneratne, 1976. 'Traditional Elements in the Fiction of Kamala Markandaya, R. K. Narayan and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', World Literature in English, 15, No. 1, 1976, pp. 121-134.

_____, 1978. 'Irony in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Heat and Dust', New Literature Review, 4, 1978, pp. 41-50.

_____, 1979. 'Film into Fiction: The Influence upon Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Fiction of Her Work for the Cinema 1960-1976', World Literature Written in English, 18, No. 2, 1979, pp. 368-386.

_____, 1979 (b). 'Ruth Jhabvala: Generating Heat and Light', Kunapipi, 1, No. 1, pp. 115-129.

_____, 1983. Silence, Exile and Cunning. Orient Longman: New Delhi.

_____, 1983 (b). 'Contemporary India in the Writing of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Westerly, 28, 1983, pp. 73-86.

_____, 1983 (c). 'Literary Influences on the Writing of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala'. In Language and Literature: ACLALS Proceedings. (eds.) Stendra Nandan and James A. Maraj. Published by University of South Pacific: Suva, Fiji.

_____, 1984. 'Apollo, Krishna, Superman: The Image of India in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Ninth Novel', Ariel: A Review of International English Literature, 2, 15 April 1984, pp.109-117.

Katherine Gordon, 1982. Peacock in Jeopardy (Book IV of the Peacock Quartet). Hodder & Stoughton: Great Britain.

Paul Gray, 1986. 'Tributes of Empathy and Grace', Time, 12 May 1986. p. 57.

Allen J. Greenberger, 1969. The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism 1880-1960. Oxford University Press. London.

Paul Grimes, 1976. 'A Passage to U.S. for Writer of India', New York Times, 15 May 1976, p. 14.

Elizabeth de Guise, 1988. Dance of the Peacocks. Grafton Books: London.

John Haffenden, 1983. 'John Haffenden talks to Iris Murdoch', Literary Review, No. 58, Aprl 1983, pp. 31-35.

William F. Hall, 1969. 'Bruno's Dream: Technique and Meaning in the Novels of Iris Murdoch', Modern Fiction Studies, 15, No. 3, Autumn 1969, pp. 429-444.

Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, 1981. Katherine Mansfield. Macmillan Press: London.

S. C. Harrex, 1972. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala'. In Contemporary Novelists. (ed.) James Vinson. St. James Press: London.

Lois Hartley, 1965. 'R. Prawer Jhabvala, Novelist of Urban India', Literature East and West, 9, 1965, pp. 265-273.

Ihab Hassan, 1961. Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel. Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey.

Connie Hayball, 1982. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's India', Journal of Indian Writing in English, (2) 9 July 1982, pp. 42-54.

Ronald Hayman, 1976. 'In a Strange Land'. In The Novel Today (1967-1975). Longman: Harlow.

Elizabeth Heine (ed.), 1983. The Arbinger Edition of E. M. Forster. (vol. 14) Edward Arnold: London.

Ignatius Hemenway, 1975. The Novel of India (vol. 1 The Indo-Anglian Novel, vol. 2 The Anglo-Indian Novel). A Writers Workshop Publication: Calcutta.

John R. Hinnells and Eric J. Sharpe (eds.), 1972. Hinduism. Oriel Press: Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

John Holloway, 1983. 'The Literary Scene'. In The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: The Present (vol. 8). (ed.) Boris Ford. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

K. R. Srinivasan Iyengar, 1973. Indian Writing In English. Asia Publishing House: New York.

Shamsul Islam, 1979. Chronicles of the Raj. Macmillan Press: London.

Ian Jack, 1980. 'The Foreign Travails of Mrs. Jhabvala', Sunday Times Magazine, 13 July 1980, pp. 32-36.

Dorrana Jacobson and S. Wadley, 1977. Women in India: Two Perspectives. Manohar Book Service: New Delhi.

Getrude Jobes, 1962. Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols (Part I and 2). The Scacerow Press Inc: New York.

Gabriel Josipovici, 1971. The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction. Macmillan: London.

_____ (ed.), 1975. The Modern English Novel: the reader, the writer and the work. Open Books: London.

Anees Jung, 1987. Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Michiko Kakutani, 1986. 'Insight from Out of India', New Straits Times, 27 June 1986, p. 8.

K. M. Kapadia, 1966. Marriage and Family in India. Oxford University Press: London.

Promilla Kapur, 1972. Marriage and the Working Woman in India. Vikas Publications: New Delhi.

Chetan Karnani, 1968. 'Satirical Indian Novel', Journal of Commonwealth Literature, No. 3, 1967, pp. 132-133.

M. M. Kaye, 1979. The Far Pavilions. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

_____, 1980. The Shadow of the Moon. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

John Keay, 1973. Into India. John Murray: London.

Olga Kenyon, 1988. Women Novelists Today. Harvester Press: Brighton, Sussex.

Bruce King (ed.), 1974. Literatures of the World in English. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London.

_____, 1980. 'Three Novels and some Conclusions: Guerillas, The Adaptable Man, Heat and Dust'. In The New English Literatures. Macmillan: London.

Rudyard Kipling, 1961. Kim. Macmillan: London.

Joanna Kirkpatrick, 1977. 'Women in Indian English Literature: A Question of Individuation', Journal of South Asian Literature, Vol. 12, 1977, pp. 121-129.

Viney Kirpal, 1988. 'What is the Modern Third World Novel?', Journal of Commonwelath Literature in English, Vol. XXIII, No. I, 1988, pp. 144-156.

Murray Krieger (ed.), 1966. Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism. Columbia University Press, New York.

R. D. Laing, 1967. The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Beatrice P. Lamb, 1975. India; A World in Transition. Praeger Publishers: New York.

Richard Lannoy, 1971. The Speaking Tree. Oxford University Press: London.

David Lodge, 1966. The Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London.

_____, 1981. The Language of Fiction. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London.

David Mandelbaum, 1970. Society in India. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Vettam Mani (ed.), 1975. Puranic Encyclopaedia. Motilal Banarsidass: New Delhi.

Manohar Malgonkar, 1962. Combat of Shadows. Orient Paperbacks: New Delhi.

Kamala Markandaya, 1956. Nectar in a Sieve. Jaico Publishing House: Bombay.

_____, 1967. Possession. Jaico Publishing House. Bombay.

_____, 1982. Pleasure City. Chatto & Windus. London.

D. Massa (ed.), 1979. Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature. University Press: Malta.

Yolanta May, 1975. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in Conversation with Yolanta May', New Review, 2, No. 21, 1975, pp. 53-57.

Gita Mehta, 1979. Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East. Simon and Shuster: New York.

John Mellors, 1976. 'Merging with India', London Magazine, NS 16, No. 3, 1976, pp. 92-97.

J. Gordon Melton, 1986. Encyclopaedic Handbook of Cults in America. Garland Publishing Inc: New York.

George Meredith, 1956. 'An Essay on Comedy'. In Comedy. (ed.) Wylie Sypher. Doubleday Anchor Book: New York.

Jeffrey Meyers, 1973. Fiction and the Colonial Experience. Boydell Press: Ipswich.

John Milton, [1644] 'Areopagitica'. In Milton's Prose. (ed.) Malcolm W. Wallace, 1925 . Oxford University Press: London.

V. V. Mirashi and N. R. Navlekar, 1969. Kalidasa, Date, Life and Works. Popular Prakashan: Bombay.

Patricia W. Mooney, 1977. 'Another Dimension of Living', Newsweek, 31 Oct. 1977, p. 48B.

Susan Moore, 1985. 'Comic Novels about India: Neglected Masters, and Others', Quadrant, 9, 29 Sept. pp. 76-79.

Caroline Moorehead, 1975. 'A solitary writer's window on the heat and dust of India', The Times, 20 Nov. 1975, p. 16.

Bharati Mukherjee, 1989. The Middleman & Other Stories. Prentice-Hall of India Private Ltd: New Delhi.

_____, 1990. Jasmine. Viking: New Delhi.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, 1971. Twice-Born Fiction: Indian Novels in English. Heinemann: New Delhi.

_____, 1978. 'Inside the Outsider'. In Awkward Conscience. (ed.) C. D. Narasimhaiah. Sterling Publishers: New Delhi.

_____, 1982. 'Journey's End for Jhabvala'. In Modern Indo-English Fiction. (ed.) Dr. R. K. Dhawan, Bahri Publications: New Delhi.

_____, 1983. 'Towards Liberation: Four Recent Novels for India', Westerly, 28 Dec., No. 4, pp. 66-72.

D. C. Muecke, 1969. The Compass of Irony. Methuen: London.

_____, 1970. Irony and the Ironic. Methuen: London.

Iris Murdoch, 1959. 'The Sublime, and the Beautiful Revisited', Yale Review, Vol. XLIX, Dec. 1959, pp. 247-271.

_____, 1963. Under the Net. Chatto & Windus: London.

_____, 1965. The Bell. Chatto & Windus: London.

_____, 1966. The Flight from the Enchanter. Chatto & Windus: London.

_____, 1970. Bruno's Dream. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

_____, 1971. An Accidental Man. Chatto & Windus: London.

_____, 1975. The Sacred and Profane Love Machine. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

_____, 1980. Nuns and Soldiers. Chatto & Windus: London.

_____, 1980. The Sea, The Sea. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

M. K. Naik, S. K. Desai and G. S. Amur (eds.), 1968. Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English. Karnatak University: Dharwar.

M. K. Naik, S. K. Desai and S. T. Kallapur (eds.), 1971. The Image of India in Western Creative Writing. Karnatak University: Dharwar.

V. S. Naipaul, 1964. An Area of Darkness. Andre Deutsch: London.

_____, 1977. India: A Wounded Civilization. Andre Deutsch: London.

K. C. Nambiar, 1974. 'Indian Women Novelists Writing In Engilsh', Journal of School of Languages, Vol. 2, 1974, pp. 75-84.

Krishna Nandan Sinha (ed.), 1979. Indian Writing in English. Heritage Publishers: New Delhi.

C. D. Narasimhaiah (ed.), 1967. Fiction and the Reading Public in India. University of Mysore: Mysore.

R. K. Narayan, 1958. The Guide. Bodley Head: London.

_____, 1965. The Bachelor of Arts. Indian Thought Publications: Mysore.

_____, 1977. The Painter of Signs. Heinemann: London.

_____, 1978. The English Teacher. Heinemann: London.

Pauline Nestor, 1985. Female Friendships and Communities. Clarendon Press: Oxford.

W. H. New, 1975. New Worlds.
(An Introduction to Modern Commonwealth and South African Fiction), Press Porcepic: Ontario.

D. L. Norton and Mary F. Kille, 1971. Philosophies of Love. Chandler Publishing Company: San Francisco.

Troy Wilson Organ, 1974. Hinduism: Its Historical Development. Barron's Educational Series: New York.

Lyn Owen, 1978. 'A Passage from India to America', Observer, 9 April 1978, p. 30.

Panchatantra. (trans.) G. L. Chandiramani, 1974. Chandiramani Publishing House: Bombay.

Benita Parry, 1972. Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination 1880-1930. Pergamon Press: London.

R. S. Pathak, 1982. 'The Indo-English Novelists' Quest for Identity'. In Modern Indo-English Fiction. (ed.) Dr. R. K. Dhawan. Bahri Publications: New Delhi.

Melinda Camber Potter, 1978. 'Scriptwriter for Ivory', The Times, 13 July 1978, p. 12.

N. S. Pradhan, 1980. 'The Problem of Focus in Jhabvala's Heat and Dust', Indian Literary Review, 1, No. 1, 1978, pp. 15-20.

James Price, 1976. 'Victors and Victims', Encounter, 46, No. 2, 1976, pp. 65-66.

V. S. Pritchett, 1973. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: Snares and Delusions', The New Yorker, 16 June 1973, pp. 106-109.

John Pym, 1983. The Wandering Company: Twenty-one Years of Merchant Ivory Films. British Film Institute: London.

S. Radhakrishnan, 1947. Religion and Society. Allen & Unwin: London.

_____, 1980. The Hindu View of Life (1927). Unwin Paperbacks: London.

E. W. Raghavan, 1984. Irony in the Works of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Houston.

Bhalchandra Rajan, 1961. Too Long in the West. Jaico Publishing House: Bombay.

D. Rama Krishna, 1979. 'Academics and Yogis: Reflections on the Recent Indo-English Fiction', The Journal of Indian Writing in English. 3, 1979, pp. 89-96.

A. K. Ramanujan (trans.), 1987. Speaking of Siva. Penguin Classics: Harmondsworth.

Raja Rao, 1967. Kanthapura. New Directions: New York.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, 1983. Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics. Methuen: London.

Aileen D. Ross, 1961. The Hindu Family in its Urban Setting. University of Toronto Press: Toronto.

Denis De Rougemont, 1983. Love in the Western World (rev. edn.). (trans.) Montgomery Belgion. Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey.

David Rubin, 1984. 'Ruth Jhabvala in India', Modern Fiction Studies, 30 (4), Winter 1984, pp. 669-683

_____, 1986. After the Raj. University Press of New England: Hanover (USA).

Anna Rutherford, 1975. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Window on India', ACLALS Bulletin, 4th Series, No. 3, 1975. pp. 27-29.

Anna Rutherford and Kirsten Holst Peterson, 1976. 'Heat and Dust: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Experience of India', World Literature Written in English, 15, 1976, pp. 373;377.

Nayantara Sahgal, 1987. Plans for Departure. Penguin: Harmondsworth.

Jacqueline Sarsby, 1983. Romantic Love and Society. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

L. S. R. Krishna Sastry, 1971. 'The Alien Consciousness in Jhabvala's Short Stories'. In The Two-Fold Voice (Essays on Indian Writing in English). (ed.) D. V. K. Raghavacharyulu. Navodaya Publishers: Vijayawada Guntur, India.

_____, 1977. 'East-West Encounter in Indo-Anglian Fiction'. In Essays and Studies. Festschrift in Honour of Professor V. Viswanathan. (ed.) G. V. L. N. Sarma. Triveni Publishers: Machilipatham, India.

Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, 1966. The Nature of Narrative. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Paul Scott, 1976. The Raj Quartet. Heinemann: London.

_____, 1976. 'Women in Love', Country Life, 15 July 1976, p. 185.

_____, 1977. Staying On. Heinemann: London.

_____, 1985. The Alien Sky. Grafton Books: London.

Sri Sankar Sen Gupta (ed.), 1969. Women in Indian Folklore. India Publications: Calcutta.

Valerie Shaw, 1983. The Short Story: A Critical Introduction. Longman: New York.

Vasant Shahane, 1974. 'Indo-Anglian Fiction and the Question of Form', Journal of Indian Writing in English, Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1974, pp. 33-36.

_____, 1976. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Arnold Heinemann: New Delhi.

_____, 1976 (b). 'An Artist's Experience of India: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Fiction', Literary Criterion, 12, Nos. 2 & 3, pp. 47-62.

_____, 1977. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and the Indian Scene', Journal of Indian Writing in English, 4, No. 2, 1977, pp. 21-24.

_____, 1977 (b). 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's A New Dominion', Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 12, No. 1, 1977, pp. 45-55.

Laura Shapiro, 1987. 'When East Meets West', Newsweek, 31 Aug. 1987, p. 113.

Meena Shirwadkar, 1979. Image of Women in the Indo-Anglian Novel. Sterling Publishers PUT: New Delhi.

Bapsi Sidhwa, 1989. Ice Candy Man. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Lee Siegel, 1978. Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in Indian Tradition as Exemplified in the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Bhupal Singh, 1934. A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction. Oxford University Press. London.

Brijraj Singh, 1980. 'Looking for a Classic in Indian English Writing', The Humanities Review, 2, 1980, pp. 15-23.

R. S. Singh, 1977. 'Ironic Vision of a Social Realist: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala'. In Indian Novel in English. A Critical Study. Arnold Heinemann: New Delhi.

Rahul Singh (ed.), 1969. Kushwant Singh's India. India Book House PVT: Bombay.

_____ (ed.), 1977. Kushwant Singh's India Without Humbug. India Book House PUT: Bombay.

The Song of God, Bhagavad Gita (trans.) Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, 1953. Phoenix House: London.

Eunice de Souza, 1978. 'The Blinds Drawn and the Air Conditioner On: The Novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', World Literature Written in English, 17, No. 1, 1978, pp. 219-224.

_____, 1978 (b). 'The Expatriate Experience'. In Awakened Conscience. (ed.) C. D. Narasimhaiah. Sterling Publishers: New Delhi.

Percival Spear, 1978. The Oxford History of Modern India 1740-1975. Oxford University Press: Delhi.

Randall Stevenson, 1986. The British Novel Since the Thirties: An Introduction. B. T. Batsford Ltd: London.

Laurie Sucher, 1989. The Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: The Politics of Passion. Macmillan: London.

Patrick Swinden, 1980. Paul Scott, Images of India. Macmillan Press: London.

A. E. Taylor, 1971. Plato. The Man and his Work. Methuen: London.

W. M. Thackeray, 1905. The History of Henry Esmond. [1852]. Macmillan: London.

Edward Thompson, 1938. An Indian Day. Penguin Books Ltd: Harmondsworth.

Robert Towers, 1983. 'Leo and the Ladies of Temperament', New York Times Book Review, 12 June 1983, p. 3, continued on p. 41.

_____, 1987. 'Breaking The Spell', New York Review of Books, 8 Oct. 1987, p. 45.

Unsigned, 1965. 'Indian Austen', Times Literary Supplement, 20 May 1965, p. 385.

_____, 1973. 'A Novelist of India Reflects on Two Worlds', New York Times, 17 July 1973, p. 31.

_____, 1988. 'Winning Against the Odds', Asiaweek, 22 July 1988, pp. 26-27.

John Updike, 1976. 'Raman and Daisy and Olivia and the Nawab', New Yorker, 5 July 1976, pp. 82-84.

_____, 1983. 'Louise and the New World', New Yorker, 1 Aug. 1983, pp. 85-87.

_____, 1988. S. A Novel. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Vandana, 1978. Gurus, Ashrams and Christians. Darton, Longman and Todd: London.

P. N. Varma, 1976. 'A Note on the Novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', University of Rajasthan Studies in English, No. 5, 1971, pp. 87-96.

Paul Verghese, 1971. Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English. Somaiya Publications PVT Ltd: Bombay.

Vivekenanda, 1962. 'Karma in its effects on character'. In The Complete Works of Swami Vivekenanda (vol. 1). Advaita Ashram: Calcutta.

_____, 1964. 'Work is Worship'. In The Complete Works of Swami Vivekenanda (vol. v). Advaita Ashram: Calcutta.

G. Vlastos, 1984. 'The Individual as an Object of Love'. In Philosophy Through its Past. (ed.) Ted Honderich. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Benjamin Walker, 1968. Hindu World (vols. 1 & 2). George Allen and Unwin: London.

William Walsh, 1983. 'India and the Novel'. In The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: The Present (vol. 8). (ed.) Boris Ford. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Janet Watts, 1979. 'Three's Company', Observer Magazine, 17 June 1979, p. 61.

Bernard Weinraub, 1983. 'The Artistry of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', New York Times Magazine, 11 Sept. 1983, p. 64, continued pp. 106-114.

Haydn Moore Williams, 1969. 'The Yogi and the Babbitt: Themes and Characters of the New India, in the Novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', Twentieth Century Literature, 15, No. 2, 1969, pp. 81-90.

_____, 1971. 'Strangers in a Backward Place: Modern India in the Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala', Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 6, No. 1, 1971, pp. 53-64.

_____, 1972. 'R. K. Narayan and R. Prawer Jhabvala: Two Interpreters of Modern India', Literature East and West, 16, 1972, pp. 1136-1154.

Renee Winegarten, 1974. 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: A Jewish Passage to India', Midstream, March 1974, pp. 72-79.

Robert Wuthnow, 1978. Experimentation in American Religion. University of California Press: California.

_____, 1988. The Restructuring of American Religion. Society and Faith Since World War II. Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey.

R. C. Zaehner, 1961. Mysticism: Sacred and Profane. Oxford University Press: London.

_____ (trans. and ed.), 1966. Hindu Scriptures. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd: London.

_____, 1966 (b). Hinduism. Oxford University Press: London.