

**VOICES AGAINST THE WIND:
BARBARA BATCHELOR AND OTHERS**

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore the theme of the middle-aged women in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* and the reasons they are so important to the theme of colonialism. Scott seems to use these women as metaphors for the British colonial experience: each in her own way demonstrates a unique facet of the raj. Even more so than the male administrators (whom one would have thought were pivotal to this particular experience), the women dominate the novels. Each embodies an aspect of the problems arising from within the colonial experience that is not resolved by the battling male population.

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Thanks!

This then, must stand as "my own typically hamfisted offering to the future."

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Textual Note

The major works (primary sources) are cited within the body of this thesis. I have abbreviated the texts as follows:

The Jewel in the Crown -- Jewel

The Day of the Scorpion -- Scorpion

The Towers of Silence -- Towers

A Division of the Spoils -- Division

and

A Passage to India -- Passage

PROLOGUE

By the time E. M. Forster came to address "that whole Indian question" in *A Passage to India*, the Empire herself was limping along like some slightly deranged old woman who was suffering from a yet undiagnosed disease. A certain nausea, a vague feeling of illness or unease dogged the members of the British raj --that same nausea which overcame Mrs. Moore in the caves at Marabar and which continued to haunt her until she gave up the ghost "somewhere about Suez".¹ Certainly by the time Paul Scott came to pen his first words for the first novel of *The Raj Quartet* that sickness had embedded itself into the psyche of anyone who had ever been part of the British presence in India. Adopting Forster, and yet all the while rewriting his "own metaphors for suffering"² Paul Scott encased his history of the Anglo-Indian conflict in the soul of one slightly mad middle-aged missionary, Barbara Batchelor. In very little time, both women became synonymous with not only "that whole Indian question", but indeed, came to represent the British conscience of the raj years. Both Mrs. Moore and Barbara Batchelor had become specimens "living in a perpetual Edwardian sunshine". (*Division*, 457) Their memories are indelibly

etched into our consciousness, their essence captured in two distinct yet diffusing rays of that Edwardian light which allows them, alternately, to surface, submerge and occasionally bleed into each other like paints from a not-yet-dry canvas left too long under a sweltering Indian sun. In essence, they are the mystery and fabric of the Raj.

It is this mystery of the middle-aged woman in India, half mad, half mystic which I propose to explore in the pages that follow. There is no metaphor more appropriate, more fitting for a faltering Empire than is the body and spirit of an old woman. As her faculties begin to fail her, there is that inevitable retreat into silence. Although it is often mistaken as a time for personal reflection and introspection, it may well be a silence born from despair. Perhaps then, these women are lending a voice to those who have the ears to hear the wisdom that they own and are able to impart. Perhaps it is so for England also: that these women (like Mrs. Moore, Barbara Batchelor, and others as we shall see) can answer for us metaphorically the very questions which the whole of the male-dominated British raj has not yet done.

NOTES TO PROLOGUE

1. E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) 255.
2. Nadine Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 196.

CHAPTER I

Since the publication of *The Jewel in the Crown*, the first of Paul Scott's four novels known collectively as *The Raj Quartet*, there has been the unmistakable association of his work with E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Much in the same manner as Forster had done, Scott addresses the implications of the British presence in India. The same metaphors appear to be used in the same manner; indeed, the mirror seems to reflect the same characters (Mrs. Moore reincarnated as Barbara Batchelor, Adela Quested as Daphne Manners). The landscape is still encircled by a ring of fire and the same echo still seems to return as only "boum". Because of this association Scott's novels were greeted with scepticism and guarded praise. Of course, dealing with these criticisms on a purely literary basis, the fact does present itself that the "Indian Question" had already been addressed and apparently been put to rest by Forster.¹ As for the sociological implications or historical merits, the consensus seemed to be, at least for a short time, that "they [the novels] are all right in their way, but why does he [Scott] have to revive all that old bitterness?"²

On both points I differ. "That old bitterness",

for one, had never been completely defused. Underneath the guarded politeness in the exchanges between India and England, there still lay a certain rancour. Even today, the repercussions come back to haunt us, but the ghost goes "so far" and no further. Like the ghost of Mrs. Moore, whose presence was shaken off "somewhere about Suez", we do not allow the old bitterness to enter the surface of our present thoughts. We "shake it off" before it enters the conscious mind. But, the bitterness must be deciphered before it can be defused. The novels, then, offer a certain therapeutic quality. Only through knowing--but really knowing -- can there be acceptance. Once the past has been accepted one can move forward. Perhaps this is what Scott intended when he said he chose the last days of the British Raj as metaphors to illustrate his view of life.³ Only by accepting one's history can one continue:

One is not ruled by the past, one does not rule or re-order it, one simply is it, in the same way that one is as well the present and part of the future. . . The one thing one cannot escape in life is its continuity.⁴

Scott provides us, then, through *The Raj Quartet* the opportunity to re-evaluate, to accept, and to continue.

Therefore, it seems very fitting that Scott should continue from where Forster left off. Scott himself is the first to acknowledge his debt to Forster.⁵ However, Scott accomplished what Forster never could have: he reached beyond the echo, beyond the "boum" and exposed the bare bones of Empire. Perhaps Forster did not venture

further because he was afraid to expose that elemental vulnerability in himself, and hence in the Empire. If one begins to admit that there are cracks in the Tower, one will be further forced to admit that the structure is not sound. Forster was unable or unwilling to do this for he believed in the essential soundness of England, of Empire. A tentative vulnerability emerges through Mrs. Moore, but Forster does not leave the door open for her sentiments to reach England:

A ghost followed the ship up the Red Sea but failed to enter the Mediterranean. Somewhere about Suez there is always a social change: the arrangements of Asia weaken and those of Europe begin to be felt, and during the transition Mrs. Moore was shaken off. (*Passage*, 255)
[my emphasis]

Forster was willing to let England enter India, but not India England. Instead, he leaves India to such as Ronny Heaslop who are

... out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force. I'm not a missionary or a Labour Member or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. . . We're not pleasant in India, and we don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important to do.
(*Passage*, 69)

But, the cycle is not complete if the world is left to such men as Ronny Heaslop. If so, the world would be sterile -- and India is so fertile with emotion. So, rather than leave the country to working men only, Scott peoples his India with soldiers as well as poets and missionaries -- the passionate, emotional ones with whom

Forster could not deal.

Scott's tale exposes many tender vulnerabilities and in this respect it is telling that all but one of his major characters are women. Scott realizes that women are vulnerable in ways men can never be and hence they are the more likely to risk and effectively promote the exposure, and consequences, of truth. In his search for a deeper truth, Scott places Barbara Batchelor as his main seeker/protagonist. Barbie is the missionary whom Forster feared, and she is that part of Mrs. Moore which has been allowed to enter the Mediterranean, and inherently, the psyche of England. Half madwoman, half mystic, she is the scorned yet transfigured child of England who rises from beneath the clear white skin of the raj.

There are other women in the novels, of course, who are more adept at piercing through the white mask of the raj --strong, conscientious women like Sarah Layton, Lady Manners and Daphne Manners -- and there are the silent conscientious objectors like Edwina Crane and Mabel Layton, but none is so complete as Barbie. She is Paul Scott's perfect panoramic miniature. In the portrait of Barbie, all the colours run. It is for the reader alone to decide whether she, like Lady Manners, ever reaches the latter's state of grace; and if so, for Barbie alone to decide whether the journey into grace was worth the pain and effort.

*

There is, of course, a state of grace into which one falls, and another from which one falls. That is the double-edged sword of knowledge. The art of knowing is first associated with Sarah Layton in connection with Lady Manners. When Sarah visits the older woman on her houseboat, Sarah comments: "What a lot you know." Scott adds: "She made it sound like a state of grace." (Scorpion, 56). Naively, Sarah responds appreciatively for the elder lady's knowledge. It is evident that Sarah has not yet learned that there can be only a hair's breadth difference between knowledge and wisdom (or "knowingness" as Scott suggests (Scorpion, 56)) but it is evident that Lady Manners is aware of the fine distinction:

Perhaps . . . I [Lady Manners] gave the impression, common in elderly people, not only of having a long full life behind me that I could dip into more or less at random. . . but also of being undisturbed by any doubts about the meaning and value of that life and the opinions I'd formed while leading it; although that suggests knowingness, and when she said "what a lot you know" she made it sound like a state of grace, one that she envied me in the **mistaken belief that I was in it**, while she was not, and didn't understand how, things being as she finds them, one ever achieved it. (Scorpion, 56).
[my emphasis]

Although Sarah will later come to re-evaluate her opinion, for the moment the implication of the fine distinction which she herself has made (i.e., "knowing" as distinct from "remembering", implying inner wisdom as opposed to worldly knowledge) escape her, much as they do

Barbie on the occasion of her apotheosis. Having learned from Ronald Merrick the contents of Edwina Crane's suicide note: "There is no God. Not even on the road from Dibrapur." (Towers, 386), Barbie toys with the semantics of such despairing knowledge: "There is no God, not even on the road from Dibrapur. But then, . . . I am taking the road to Dibrapur, not **from** it." (Towers, 390). With myopic vision, as with Sarah's innocent vision, Barbie wishes to believe that the weight of knowledge shifts depending upon which side of the road she stands. It is Lady Manners who realizes that there is no such division: to or from Dibrapur, the road is the same. At some point, one will reach that same bend in the road, that same spot upon which Edwina sat in the rain, cradling the body of a man for whose death she was responsible. At some point one will have to accept the burden of knowing, just as Lady Manners accepts Parvati, who, in Hindu mythology, is, pointedly, the Mother of Knowledge.

While Barbie toys frivolously with the semantics of knowledge, she is suddenly and brutally awakened by the truth. On her way down Club Road, weighed down by her worldly baggage, Barbie becomes entangled in the butterfly lace, which, throughout the novels, has emerged as a symbol for the poor unknowing prisoners of India. Barbie is finally immersed, is entangled, heart and soul, by the very essence of India. What she had sought for so long, and which had for so long eluded her, comes upon her like

an ambush. Barbie's catastrophe in the rain precipitates a re-enactment of Edwina's despair on the road from Dibrapur. Ironically, Barbie is on her way to Dibrapur when her own tragedy strikes. The incident catapults Barbie into the other side of the road of knowing. She has entered her own peculiar state of grace. Like all others who have reached this state, Barbie waits only to die.

Although Barbie's fate will be explored in some detail later in this essay, the connection is herein suggested and briefly addressed, because from out of this web there emerge yet two more figures who are "caught" like Barbie: Scott's Mabel Layton and E.M. Forster's Mrs. Moore. Tentatively, the mind reaches forth and wishes to create some psychic or psychological link between Mrs. Moore and Barbara Batchelor. Briefly, the same echoes resound: Barbie and Mrs. Moore are both depicted as two ~~middle-aged seeker/mystics who are in a desperate search~~ for the "real India".⁶ They hear their echoes speaking to them, yet because it speaks from out of their own despair, the sound only echoes "boum" and no more. But, in the end Barbara Batchelor outstrips Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore folds her conscience back into the steamer trunk from which it had emerged several months previous, and sails for England. Barbie, on the other hand, prefers to challenge her faith and her fate, in the embrace of a country which has thus far revealed nothing and has had no use for her

kind of interference.

*

Mrs. Moore realizes the effeteness of her own presence in India as much as does Barbie and yet for one brief instant one has the hope that Mrs. Moore will rise to the strength of her convictions: "Of course he is innocent." she says to Ronny and Adela about Aziz. (Passage, 209). But, in the same breath, it is said she speaks only "indifferently". Finally, she becomes explicit:

I am not good, no, bad. . . A bad old woman, bad, bad, detestable. I used to be good with the children growing up, also I meet this young man in his mosque, I wanted him to be happy. Good, happy, small people. They do not exist, they were a dream. . . But I will not help you to torture him for what he never did. There are different ways of evil and I prefer mine to yours. (Passage, 210)

Watching Mrs. Moore's moral strength fail her, one is reminded of Mabel Layton's fatalistic acceptance: "It's all exactly as it was when I first saw it more than forty years ago. I can't even be angry. But someone ought to be." (Towers, 201). The implication is that nothing has changed with the **raj** within the last forty years; nothing has changed for Mabel Layton either, nor would it have for Mrs. Moore had she invested as much time. In the end, Mabel is only preferring her kind of evil to theirs. She is no different than Mrs. Moore and therefore is equally ineffectual.

By making this comparison, the mind breaks the

link between Mrs. Moore and Barbie and reinforces the bonds which exist between Mrs. Moore and Mabel Layton. Barbie is what Mrs. Moore would have/could have become had Forster dared enter the mystic. Increasingly, one realizes Mrs. Moore is only an outline, a sketch of a character, not fully painted. Scott prescribes the same fate for Mabel Layton. Barbie reflects:

Mabel had come closer to meeting her than she had come to meeting Mabel. After three years Barbie still knew almost nothing about her friend but even if one discounted facts not taken in because of deafness Mabel must now know almost everything about Barbie because Barbie had told her over and over. (Towers, 95).

It is not so much that Mabel comes closer to meeting Barbie than Barbie Mabel, for this would suggest some offering, some gift of herself. Rather, it is Barbie who painstakingly extracts fragments from Mabel and hopelessly, and indeed helplessly tries to recreate a sense of wholeness out of her friend's life. By offering herself to Mabel, Barbie re-enacts the offering she herself has made to India. In both cases, the answer is a resounding silence; in both cases, nothing is given freely. With Mabel, as with India, the offerings are scratched from out of the dried soil by the hunger of a despairing suppliant. In India's case, who will save her? In Mabel's, Barbie tries to save her friend by trying to pull her out of her silence:

Barbie got to her feet, moved forward a bit, and thought Mabel wasn't looking at

the garden at all. Her eyes were open but on her face was an expression of the most profound resignation Barbie had ever seen.

"Mrs. Layton? Are you all right?" Barbie spoke distinctly and calmly but her object of letting Mrs. Layton know that assistance was at hand was not achieved. [Barbie realized]. . . she was deaf. (Towers, 29)

*

Behind the seclusion of Rose Cottage, Mabel "awaits with Spartan fortitude for her life to run its course" (Towers, 207). Mrs. Moore also chooses to withdraw:

It is time I was left in peace. Not to die No doubt you expect me to die. . . . I'll retire into a cave of my own. . . . Somewhere where no young people will come asking questions and expecting answers. Some shelf. (Passage, 205).

There is, between Mabel Layton and Mrs. Moore, a connection which, to borrow a phrase from V.S. Naipaul, is of a more "elemental complexity".⁷ Both seek to fall into that "greater disorder", to fall into a void which will ease the struggle of existence, one in any case, from which they have retired but which refuses to give up the body's ghost.

To be one with the universe! So dignified and simple. But there was always some little duty to be performed first, some new card to be turned up from the diminishing pack and placed, and while she was pottering about, the Marabar struck its gong. (Passage, 212)

Mrs. Moore is imprisoned by her own performance of "little

duties" her own perverse attachment to a life for which she no longer cares. In Mabel, one finds that same doomed acceptance:

She [Mabel] puts her hand on my arm
[Barbie's] and I am imprisoned by
her capacity to survive. A sentence
of life, suffered with patience and
forbearance and with small pleasures
taken by the minute, not the hour.
(Towers, 207)

Mrs. Moore's "little duties" are transformed into Mabel Layton's "small pleasures", but neither expresses a will to live, only a capacity to survive. Like India's own history, the struggle speaks of naked endurance, not life. Nicky Paynton, in describing the greater disease of the raj cries out: "The bloody rot's set in." (Towers, 255) One could not find more adequate words to describe Mrs. Moore's and Mabel's insidious affliction.

In an essay on E.M. Forster, Peter Burra compares Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Wilcox (*Howards End*) who is yet another of those silent enduring women:

They [Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Wilcox] both seem to have withdrawn from a world whose little stupidities and illusions have ceased to affect them except as they distract the inner life.⁸

This passage is true for all these women. Indeed, if one were to substitute Mabel's name for Mrs. Wilcox's in Burra's essay, the reader would not be aware that a displacement had occurred. Burra further emphasizes the psychic bond between Mrs. Wilcox and Mrs. Moore:

One rather strange accident attaches

to both of them: they belong to the enemy's camp -- that is to say, to the side of the clash with which we are least likely to sympathise. In fact, Mrs. Moore's Anglo-Indian setting does not call for our sympathy at all. They thus prepare for the merge of opposites.⁹

Both Mrs. Moore and Mabel Layton, through accident of birth, marriage and filial ties belong to the enemy's camp: they are the true *memsahibs*. Barbie is peripheral to this camp because she sprang from the lower-middle classes. She is caught like a butterfly fluttering between two worlds which both refuse to accept her. She is catapulted into a questionable equality within the *raj* only because, in response to an advertisement in the *Ranpur Gazette*, she was invited to share Rose Cottage with Mabel. On a purely social scale, Barbie is Mabel's inferior, as she would have been Mrs. Moore's. This creates a very important distinction to members of the *raj*. Mildred vocalizes her resentment of Barbie and thus opens a window for the reader into the thoughts of what Pankot society's private feelings were regarding Barbie's usurping role: "You were born with the soul of a parlour-maid and a parlour-maid is what you've remained. India has been very bad for you and Rose Cottage has been a disaster." (Towers, 242) Although the society women of Pankot were not as venomous or spiteful as Mildred, they were puzzled and affronted by Mabel's act. Even Sarah Layton, the most unpretentious of the Pankot camp, is

moved to say to her father that "he's not quite our class, is he?" in reference to Ronald Merrick, another character who has sprung from the lower middle-classes. (**Division**, 365) Incidentally, on a purely social scale, Merrick should have figured more prominently than Barbie. He had been a District Superintendent of Police and was now a Captain in the army, while Barbie was "only" a missionary. However, Merrick's own acceptance into society, even after his marriage to Susan, is clouded with disapproval. Scott punctuates this English belief in class division:

You can't be English and alive without being sensitive to the class problem . . . I don't think an English writer can write a novel without class in the background, even if it's not consciously written in: class cannot be detached from the English novel.

He believed this class system was accentuated in India.¹⁰

Mrs. Moore and Mabel also share a peculiar "non-involved" involvement. Although both women retire further into their silences and eventual quiet deaths, they still retain a peculiar attachment to the world from which they have retreated, and yet they both in some way fail to live up to the dictates of their respective consciences.

Historically, Mabel Layton's retirement from the raj hierarchy can be dated to Amritsar, 1919. At that time, one Brigadier-General Dyer had been responsible for the unprovoked attack upon a crowd of unarmed Indian civilians. Dyer was not immediately nor publicly reprimanded; he was, however, in due course, politely

requested to take a lesser command posting elsewhere. The British raj rallied around him and raised funds for his "retirement". In response to this mockery of justice, Mabel Layton sent her cheque to Sir Ahmed Akbar Ali Kasim (father of Mohammed Ali Kasim who figures prominently in *The Quartet*) to aid the Indian families of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. The donation was made anonymously. Mabel knew she could no longer condone the behaviour of a community which so flagrantly flaunted its abuse of power, and yet to what end could she publically align herself with the Indians? Perhaps partially a hypocrite?, more reasonably a realist?, she must have felt that to align herself with one camp or the other was to risk the worst kind of censure and ostracism. From this moment, she chooses to become, for better or worse, mistress of her own destiny. She retires behind her rose garden. From there she can cultivate life's small bounties: if she cannot add to life by being useful, perhaps she can add to it by cultivating beauty. But even this does not bring the desired consolation, because Mabel carries her own form of bitterness and cynicism. To her stepson, John, she says:

You can't have a step-mother who seems to be going native, which is the last thing I'd do. I hate the damned country now anyway. It's taken two husbands from me. To me it's not a question of choosing between poor old Dyer and the bloody browns. The choice was made for me when we took the country over and got the idea we did so for its own sake instead of ours. Dyer can look

after himself, but according to the rules, the browns can't because looking after them is what we get paid for. (Scorpion, 69)

From this time then, also dates Mabel's conviction that there is nothing she can do, nothing useful at least. Her retirement is thus all the more bitter, "because Mabel knew she brought no consolation even to a rose let alone a life." (Towers, 245). This is an action reminiscent of Mrs. Moore who chooses to return to England in order to attend to her children's needs and cultivate life's smaller bounties. Neither woman is interested in addressing the larger questions of life.

Mabel's donations to Indian charities, also dating from Amritsar 1919, are very generous. But, despite all Mabel's inherent generosity there is a certain disquiet which tugs at the mind. One realizes that, perhaps, like Mrs. Moore, Mabel's gestures are not inherently "good". Perhaps she too is a "bad old woman" and perhaps she too, is aware of her shortcomings. Her gestures are made anonymously. One could argue that she does so because she does not wish the Indian community to feel patronized by the gift of yet more scraps from the British table. Alternatively, one could argue that her commitment to "goodness" is not openly declared to either the British or the Indians. (It is only after her death that the British community is made aware of Mabel's generosity to the Indians.) Like Mrs. Moore, she does not take a stand. Or

more to the point, as Scott suggests about Forster's characters, she (like Mrs. Moore) takes her stand but then sits down. 11 Mabel's gestures, kindly as they may be intended, are ineffectual. Symbolically, she embarks on the ship to England as surely as if she had set sail with Mrs. Moore. Sadly, Mabel is aware of this; she turns in the wind, she too is caught like a butterfly looking for a place to alight, somewhere between two worlds.

*

Like the old men in Barbie's painting, Mrs. Layton and Mrs Moore are trapped:

The way the old man holds the alms bowl and the other leans on his staff. If you'd asked me to draw from memory I couldn't have but one look at it now and one thinks of course! that's how they stood, that's how the artist drew them and left them, caught them in mid-gesture so that the gestures are always being made and you never think of them as getting tired.
(Towers, 71)

Mabel holds the alms which she is forever in the gesture of giving; Mrs. Moore leans on her staff of justice which, in theory, she upholds. As the author himself reflects in that passage, that is how the artist drew them, because that is what he intended us to see. One can never think of Mabel getting tired of donating to her charities, because within the confines of her own portrait of her life she never will. Having painted herself into a corner of Rose Cottage as much by her own choosing as by Scott's rendering, there she must remain until death releases her. So too with Mrs. Moore. Scott, like Forster, only

releases his middle-aged prisoners into death, suggesting that sometimes choices are irreversible.

The same analogy can be drawn on a larger scale in dealing with the collective conscience of the **raj**. If, as seems to be the case, the gestures are continually being made, there is no sense of completion. The hand that gives will always be giving, the hand that receives eternally receiving. The act of charity thus deteriorates into a corruption of deliverance and acceptance. If the gift were released, the recipient could construct a life independent of ties; instead, the receiver must forever be beholding his giver.

*

Paul Scott reflects with insight:

It is here, in the metaphor, that the real obsession is disclosed. An obsession not with the importance of work to man, but with the idea that while love, as T.S. Eliot said, is most nearly itself when here and now cease to matter, life is most nearly itself when here and now not only matter much but can be felt to matter; when here and now are governed by a philosophy in pursuit of whose truths and rewards men know they can honourably employ themselves. 12

The two women represent resignation incarnate, and as such, life, for them, is no longer itself. Mabel waits for her life to run its course "with patience and forbearance, . . . [but without] tranquillity." (**Towers**, 207). Mrs. Moore "had always inclined to resignation. . . it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one." (**Passage**, 212) In their

separate selves, neither is committed to the act of living her own life; much less, then, can either be committed to the process of helping others to live. They are shadow people, existing in the twilight: because of their years, and because twilight is that magical moment between two worlds, when nothing, and yet everything exists. Day is not yet retired; evening has not yet risen: everything and nothing matters. Any gesture is futile because it belongs to neither world:

But in the twilight of the double vision, a spiritual muddledom is set up for which no high sounding words can be found; we can neither act nor refrain from action, we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity. (Passage, 212)

The twilight of years had come to both women at an early age. They had misspent their lives existing on the borderline of life. Very early on, Mabel convinces herself that there is nothing she can do and so manages to compromise her entire life in the pursuit of that belief. She lives in a prison which she has created. There is, in reality, nothing she can do, because as Scott suggests, in order to reap rewards, one must first honourably employ oneself. Mabel's gestures are ineffectual because there is no commitment either to herself or to the cause (India) which, in theory, she supports. "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles" (Towers, 202) Mabel substitutes charity for commitment and when the silence of her own

shame grows too loud, she imports Barbie who, with her ceaseless chatter, will help drown out the echoes of a guilty conscience. In order to drown that same echo, Mrs. Moore sails for England. Barbie remains to face hers.

There are indeed many echoes to be drowned in India, not the least of which is the raj's collective conscience, of which Mabel and Mrs. Moore, albeit unwittingly, are part. Although Mabel's sympathies lie with the Indian community, she remains, stone-like, on the side of the river which houses the English. She chooses not to cross any bridges, least of all to immerse herself in the flood. For all her inherent sensitivity she perpetrates a certain callousness towards life and the living, one which finds an echo in Mildred's behaviour to Barbie, and another which finds an echo in England's to India:

But what was being perpetrated was an act of callousness: the sin of collectively not caring a damn about desire or an expectation or the fulfillment of a promise so long as personal dignity was preserved and at a cost that could be borne without too great an effort. . . . It has never truly been our desire or intention to colour [the sky] permanently but only to make it as cloudless for ourselves as we can. (Towers, 245)

Mabel preserved her dignity (and even her integrity in some inexplicable way), but it was at a cost that she could bear without too great an effort. Although not as patently easy as Mrs. Moore's, Mabel's resignation was comparatively, "a beautiful and easy goal"! Considering

the commitment that the alternative choice offered, the commitment of stating plainly and exactly what one's intentions were, Mabel's choice was very easy.

Ironically, Mabel's final resignation -- her retreat into death -- speaks more strongly than does her stone-like vigil from the top of Pankot. Alive, she had been a nuisance, a gnat in the raj's conscience. Dead, she was an edifice of recrimination:

Alive, old Mabel Layton had been precariously contained: but her gift for stillness. . . . had made the task of containing her less difficult than her detachment implied. . . . She should no longer have been a problem but a once slightly disruptive pattern that now dissolved and faded into the fabric. But, dead, she emerged as a monument which, falling suddenly, had caused a tremor which continued to reverberate, echo. . . . (Towers, 257)

What emerges from the echo is Barbie who,

. . . . bowling down Club Road in the back of a tonga, now guarded the fibre suitcase as if it were crammed with numbered pieces of the fallen tower that had been her friend, and as if it were her intention to re-erect it in the garden of the rectory bungalow or even in a more public position, in the churchyard. . . . (Towers, 257)

Indeed, these two passages reveal the most elemental difference that exists between, and thus divide, Mabel from Barbie and reinforce the link between Mrs. Moore and Mabel. "Bowling down Club Road" with her suitcase "crammed" with the remnants of her life, Barbie stands in perfect juxtaposition against Mabel's placid resignation. With all her senses, Barbie dives into life. One feels

that Barbie does not so much live life as assault it. (Without malice, one conjures a vision of the parlour maid, sleeves rolled to the elbow, scrubbing everything vigorously.) Mrs. Moore calmly calls for her patience cards and resigns herself to her echo. Mabel's approach is equally delicate: quietly snipping her roses and sipping her tea in the shade of Rose Cottage, she causes barely a ripple in society's wave. It is only after her death, after the "wail of terror" is finally unleashed that Mabel's impact reverberates like a wave of sound through the raj. And yet, paradoxically, Mabel had experienced a death which preceded her physical death by many years. The raj had been dying for Mabel since Amritsar 1919. Since that time, Mabel assumed a death-in-life position. Just as surely as the raj continued to perpetrate its silly charade, so too did Mabel:

The charade was finished. Mabel had guessed the word years ago but had ~~refrained from speaking it~~. The word was 'dead'. Dead. Dead. It didn't matter now who said it, the edifice had crumbled and the facade fooled nobody. (Towers, 229)(my emphasis)

In the end, then, Mabel's greatest failure, and implicitly her sorrow, is what Scott himself so eloquently describes as a tender conspiracy of silence. Having made her first mistake by retreating into the silence of Rose Cottage, Mabel continues to perpetrate the lie, the charade by committing herself to conscious forgetfulness. Scott writes:

. . . I believe in forgiving but not forgetting. To forget strikes me as the quickest way of making the same mistake again, . . . I'm not sure that there is genuinely any such thing as forgetting, but there are tender conspiracies of silence, and these may engender ignorance, always a dangerous thing.¹³

Therein lies the sorrow of both Mrs. Moore and Mabel Layton. Committing the act of conscious forgetfulness, Mrs. Moore "accepted her own apathy" (*Passage*, 145) as Mabel accepted her resignation (*Towers*, 29). But both women are engulfed by the overwhelming echoes, the screams of India. Mrs. Moore is invaded by Marabar: "The crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life." (*Passage*, 160). In her sleep, Mabel Layton dreams the horrors of Jallianwallah Bagh; during the day the crush of her conscience has rendered her quite literally, deaf.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Paul Scott reflects with humour, "For the rest, it is fairly safe to say that, in terms of fiction, the subject is thought to have been dealt with satisfactorily enough by the late E.M. Forster, in his novel *A Passage to India*. And, as you may have noticed, if an Englishman thinks something satisfactory to himself he often tends to think it satisfactory for everyone."
Paul Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View", *My Appointment with the Muse: Essays 1961-1975* ed. Shelley C. Reece (London: Heineman, 1986) 112.
2. Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 113.
3. Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 115.
4. Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 119.
5. Scott says, "Forster was a very great writer and *A Passage to India* is a very great novel. . . . As my own understanding of the British Indian past grows so does my understanding of Forster's British-Indian novel. I see it now as a novel with a powerful prophetic element, as a philosophical novel, not a social novel."
Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 122.
6. Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested seek for a communion with the "real" India. They become involved with Aziz not so much because they like him but more because he, being an Indian, might be able to reveal the "real" India, of mystical, larger-than-life proportions; that is, the view of India which they perceive as elusive because they are English. Barbie is continually searching for the "real" India: she hopes her life in the missions can be validated if only she can bring one Hindu or Muslim child to (the Christian) God.
7. V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 10, 36.
8. Peter Burra, "Introduction to the Everyman Edition", *A Passage to India*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) 328.

9. Burra, "Introduction to the Everyman Edition" 328.
10. Francine S. Weinbaum, "Aspiration and Betrayal in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*", (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Xerox, University Microfilms, 1976), Doctoral Dissertation for the University of Illinois 130.
11. Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 125.
12. Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 118.
13. Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Forsterian View" 119.

CHAPTER II

As Barbara (Barbie) Batchelor leaned her life into a final communion with India or with God, in the last months of her life, she was struck dumb. Her God wished that Barbie should, finally, cease her endless chatter, her great vociferous outpourings of prayer and attempt to enter that "deeper communion" (of which T.S. Eliot spoke) with a grace and dignity befitting her stature. For, indeed, Barbie had entered into a state of grace when on August 6, 1945, the sisters found her in a halo of death, "... eternally alert, in . . . sudden sunshine, her shadow burnt into the wall behind her as if by some distant but terrible fire." (Towers, 397). Barbie achieved in death what had escaped her in life: a reunion with the God she felt had eluded her ever since her arrival in India. She struggled all her life to become part of one or the other (India -- or God, and preferably both) and in the end she achieved a union with both. She died a **sannyasin**, that is, in essence, a beggar who relinquishes all worldly possessions in order to be taken into the oblivion of Hindu peace, a peace that surpasses all understanding; and as Sarah believed (I believe correctly) Barbie found peace,

. . . the peace of absorption in a wholly demanding God, a God of love and wrath who had no connexion with the messianic principles of Christian forgiveness, . . . not -- as at other times when I had visited her -- unanchored, unweighted, withershins, attempting to communicate with the doomed world of inquiry and compromise. (Division, 377).

Even Ronld Merrick, who in many respects is the very antithesis of Barbie, remarks to Sarah, "She [Barbie] struck me as being over-excited. . . in fact exalted might be the better word. . . She put [the butterfly lace] on when she got into the tonga, like a bridal veil." (Division, 376). So, in fact, Barbie had known that her marriage to her faith, and fate, was imminent.

Thus ends the life of Scott's perfect miniature. Unacclaimed, unsung heroine whose life was a perfect parallel of the raj. Her entrance intrusive (for no one wanted her at Rose Cottage except Mabel, and perhaps Sarah), she imposed her stamp on the lives she touched, sometimes bitterly, as with Mildred, sometimes gently, as with Sarah, always protective, as with Mabel.

The British raj's own presence was very much like Barbie's life: England entered and immediately looked to change India's ways. England created an aura about her of protective father-and-mother (the *man-bap* of Barbie's allegorical painting) and her touch was, much like Barbie's, bitter, gentle and yet patronizing, as distinct from "protective". But Barbie's intrusion for the most part went unnoticed because she was just insecure enough

about herself to always question her motives, and re-evaluate them if necessary. England, with her great arrogance, "suffered her children to come unto [her]" and turned them away, stripped of possessions and dignity.

Although Barbie's life parallels England's rule in many respects, there is just enough divergence in their respective histories to give rise to many interesting questions and suppositions which are best explained in terms of Scott's sustained metaphor of the towers of silence. Both had erected their own separate towers: the raj's had become as ineffectual as Babel and foreboded only an imminent, ill-fated destiny; Barbie's fortress had become an altar from which the vultures of the Parsees would first pick her bones clean, as they had her words, and consecrate her parched soul into the sacred Ganges from where she could dip into that "deeper communion".

*

Insofar as Barbie managed to do good in her life, it is ironic that Barbie's initial purpose was to feel good, not do good. Her intention, in coming to India, was as single-minded as was the raj's, although for different reasons. The raj were not in India to announce the word of God, nor were they much interested in a mass conversion into Christianity of Hindus and Muslims alike. Above all else, England and India's ties were of an economic nature; indeed, India was "the brightest jewel in the largest empire the world had ever known."¹ Christopher Hitchens

writes that the British

had penetrated down to village level in pursuit of gain, and their introduction of cotton-milling machinery and of a network of railways had begun the transformation of [India] even though, as one Governor General reported in the year that [Thomas] Macaulay took up his post, "The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India."²

Yet, while the Indians' bones were bleaching India's plains, men like Macaulay were returning to England, fattened with financial gain. In 1834, Macaulay was offered a post as Law-Member in India, at which time he wrote to his sister:

The salary is ten thousand pounds a year. I am assured by persons who know Calcutta intimately . . . that I may live in splendour there for five thousand a year, and may save the rest. . . . I may therefore hope to return to England, at only thirty-nine, in the full vigour of life, with a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. A larger fortune I never desired.³

This, in 1833-34-35 was no small sum upon which to retire! Many indeed followed Macaulay's example into India and returned to England satiated. It would not be unjust then to say that for many, many years the English grew fat from the misfortunes of the Indians. Yet, despite this flagrant abuse, even Karl Marx was moved to write, in 1853,

. . . we must not forget that the idyllic village communities [in India] inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the

smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. . .

We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery; that they subjected man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to the sovereign of circumstances that they transformed a self-developing social state into never-changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalising worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow.⁴

Backed by such arrogance, it is little wonder that English opinion about India had not changed in the twenty years between Macaulay's letter to his sister and Karl Marx's letter to the *New York Daily Tribune*. Indeed, Marx reaffirmed that "the British were the first conquerors superior, and therefore inaccessible to Hindu civilisation."⁵ Again, what wonderful, incredible arrogance. This opinion was sustained over the almost one hundred years which divided Macaulay and Brigadier Dyer; and certainly was sustained by Brigadier A.V. Reid, one of Paul Scott's characters in *The Quartet*, (Dyer's counterpart). Reid unequivocally affirms that:

the sincere efforts we made in the years before the war to hand over more power to the Indians themselves had revealed nothing so clearly as the fact that they had not achieved the political maturity that would have made the task of granting them self-government easy. (Jewel, 288)

Reid leaves no room for error on two points he makes: 1) he is right; 2) they are inferior. For whatever reason, then, and at whatever cost, England was determined to hold India. Be it for economic gain, be it for political sovereignty, the English presided over the Indians for **their** (the Indians') **own good**. Scott re-affirms this opinion in the voice of Reid, and generally in the members of the **raj** --the hundreds of faceless, nameless ones who align themselves by supporting emotionally and financially such actions as were perpetrated by Dyer and Reid, in 1919 and 1942, respectively. Like Forster's Ronny Heaslop, these men were intent on holding "this wretched country by force." (*Passage*, 69)

In very many ways there cannot have been a great deal --outwardly --to distinguish the India of 1913 from the one to which I myself first made passage --little, that is to say, to distinguish the British side of British India. 6

Indeed there appears to have been little change over 150 years, let alone the 20-odd years that divided Forster and Scott. As a result, the English **raj** became stagnant: having profited by the imposition of their dominion they were loath to relinquish such a comfortable embrace, one which was at once financially viable and morally satisfying. In the final analysis, they as much as Barbie were in India to feel good, not do it.

The difference between the **raj's** position and Barbie's is that the former was continually surrounded by

an aura of beneficent activity, thereby creating an illusion that they **were** actually **doing** good. Even when they operated out of arrogance, the distinction seemed to be lost on them. When Colonel Layton was taken prisoner, Mildred enlisted her lover Kevin Coley to attend her on her visit to the wives and widows of her husband's battalion, ostensibly to offer consolation. She did not particularly care for these people, but she felt, just the same, that this was expected of her; and, she may have felt, in her pride, that she probably "cut quite a figure" herself as the stricken wife who could "buck up when the chips were down". She perpetuated in her person the myth that the English were strong and would remain so under whatever pressure was exerted. The Indians, on the other hand, were children who needed consoling. It is Barbie who makes us aware of the distinction between propriety and arrogance, between well-intentioned gestures and meaningless ones. Mabel, Mildred's superior in age and sentiment, had retired from the very community over which Mildred presided and the other one into which she travelled offering consolations like dispensations or holy lozenges. Mabel knew this was arrogance:

[Mildred] has a kind of nobility. It does not seem to me to matter very much whether she appears half-dressed in front of Kevin Coley. But I think it matters to God and to the world that she rode with him into the valley and offered matriarchal wisdom to women older and as wise or wiser than she. For that was arrogance, the kind which Mabel always set her face against because Mabel knew

she brought no consolation even to
a rose let alone a life. (Towers, 245)

Mildred chose not to know, preferring to drown her
ineffectiveness behind a mixture of snobbery and alcohol.

Barbie's own activity was, on the surface, no less
arrogant than Mildred's. After all, she wanted to bring
her God into a country where gods abounded from behind
every tree or rock. Not unlike the raj, she meant to
impose her own especial code of mores. She looked upon
the Indians as children, as poor helpless little blacks
who were "unbelievers through no fault of their own."
(Towers, 10) She looked forward with alacrity to her
imagined conversions:

To bring even one Hindu or Muslim
child to God struck her as a very
satisfactory thing to do and she
imagined that in the mission it
would be open to her to do this
for scores, possibly hundreds.
(Towers, 10-11)

It is difficult, however, to take Barbie's arrogance
seriously, or to be offended by it because hers is the
arrogance of an innocent. Like a child's, Barbie's
ambition is quickly redirected and she sets herself to
another task: "Initially disturbed by this secular
attitude. . . she soon accepted them as sensible
measures." (Towers, 11)

The towers of parallel histories thus rise before
us. As was previously indicated, there is just enough
divergence to make the respective histories come alive

with questions --and to those questions Scott provides more than enough answers. England had entered India for financial gain. "The British began by raping and plundering India, then developed a sentimental conscience about it, [and only then] conceived of themselves as civilizers . . . , " suggests Christopher Hitchens.⁷ This may well be true for England built her empire on the man-bap principle only after she reaped her financial rewards. But "civilizing" as such was not really their form. Scott allows Hari Kumar to speak eloquently:

. . . in the last twenty years -- whether intentionally or not -- the English have succeeded in dividing and ruling. . . the English now seem to depend upon the divisions in Indian political opinion perpetuating their own rule at least until after the war, if not for some time beyond it. . . They hate to remember that within Europe they were ever in arms against the feudal **status quo**, because being in arms against it out here is so very much **bad form**. They look upon India as a place that they came to and took over when it was disorganised, and therefore think that they can't be blamed for the fact that it is disorganised now.
(Towers, 275-276)

This, of course, is Scott's perfect response to Karl Marx's statement earlier in this paper about how disorganized India was before the "superior" conquering forces of England came to set things straight. India may well have had her own problems with which to contend, none the least of which, admittedly, was the poverty of millions of her people. But to suggest that England acted altruistically, that England "civilized", is a great affront to the truth and justice of the situation. This

sort of arrogance suggests the Indians would never have risen above the state in which they lived if not for the blessed English, that the Indians would have continued to muddle through some medieval "dark age"! This sort of arrogance subverts the notion that England needed a "civilizing" effect of her own; that thousands did not go begging in London's streets or as many die in the workhouses; that there were no revolutions or uprisings against the foul conditions under which England's own poor lived; rather, it insists, pathetically, that life in England was truly "golden".

Hari's statement addresses the notion that the English's sudden attack of conscience did not in any way benefit the Indians; rather this was the English way of maintaining, "free emotional passage home". If the *raj* collapsed, they did not mean to return to England laden with guilt. That is to say, loath as the English were to relinquish India, if the time ever came when this must be so, they wished to retreat without guilt, but with a tidy justification that, Indians, being who they were (i.e., inferior) they would not come around to appreciating England's superior influences anyway. This is not to suggest that the *raj* was evil through and through for this would only translate into a "caricature of evil" as Francine Weinbaum suggests.⁸ No nation, as no man, can be so completely evil as to have no redeeming qualities whatsoever. It is simply to say that the balance of give

and take had been upended in favour of the English more often than it had in favour of the Indians. Ironically, the hand that tipped the scale was not always an English one. Victimizer/victim: the hands are often inextricably linked. On the first page of the first novel of *The Quartet*, Scott voices his own ambiguities:

[T]he affair that began on the evening of August 9, 1942, in Mayapore, ended with the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition, not for the first time, nor as yet for the last because they were then still locked in an imperial embrace of such long standing and subtlety it was no longer possible for them to know whether they hated or loved one another, or what it was that held them together and seemed to have confused the image of their separate destinies.

Barbie exemplifies this duality. She is torn between the sweet arrogance of her need to bring solace and God to her poor helpless Indians, and the need to serve, to be of some use to those very ones she seeks to control. The division is irreconcilable. She cannot align herself completely with the English because although she feels the need for, and respects the presence of, some established and familiar ruling order, she senses a failure in that system. But neither can she cross the road to the other side to join hands with the faceless, unknown Indian who resides, pointedly, half way up (or down) Club Road. This bend in the road is truly a milestone for Barbie -- one at which she continues to grind until the supernatural forces concur and grant her personal apotheosis. By the time her vision is granted,

it is unfortunately too late to do any good for any one but Barbie.

Barbie is haunted by the shame of her inability to effect change. The ghost of her thoughts appears after Teddie Bingham's memorial service, in the form of a very real, very tangible Lady Manners. Her thoughts run to Ethel Manners, then to the unnamed? unbaptized? child of poor Daphne, and a vision of her own ineffectiveness brings a wave of despair:

[Lady Manners'] arrival and simultaneous disappearance serve to emphasize the stark division there is between our India and theirs. She has made herself one of them. The division is one of which I am ashamed. I have done nothing, nothing, to remove it, ever. (Towers, 208)

Barbie imagines that in order to be truly effective one must stop this eternal "fence sitting" and leap into one camp or the other. Barbie is not yet blessed with the totality of vision required to reconcile such a complex situation as India's. For Barbie, duality is everywhere. She envisions India, as do most members of the *raj*, in terms of two armed camps in perpetual opposition. In this light, she sees Lady Manners as one of those who has forded the flood and chosen to align herself with "them" on the opposite shore. In this, she misunderstands Lady Manners. Daphne, after all is said and done, has left Lady Manners a great legacy from which the older woman will redefine her own life. She, as much as her niece, immerses herself in the river and rejects the dualities

and divisions; she believes, as once Daphne did, not in bridging or crossing, but in immersing and mingling.

Barbie's own revelations have not yet brought her to this juncture. Her apprenticeship under Mabel is a necessary servitude. By her serving Mabel, the sorrows in Barbie's own life crystallize: they become tangible demons with whom she can wrestle and eventually come to terms.

[Barbie] thought: In a way my secret sorrow is Mabel. I don't know how much of me gets through. I'm rather like a wave dashing against a rock, the sounds I make are just like that. There is Mabel, there is the rock, there is God. They are the same to all intents and purposes.
(Towers, 95)

Mabel is Barbie's sorrow incarnate: she represents the Indians whom Barbie never had a chance to convert, she is the silence which surrounds Barbie whenever Barbie prays, she is the stone face of God, and she is the empty reflection of Barbie's own soul. Finally, she is the despair which Barbie must transcend before she can be saved.

Barbie believes she is a wave, dashing herself against life's stone face. Neither wave nor rock is changed by her efforts. Barbie becomes increasingly more despondent because her despair engulfs the whole of India. Not only does she fancy her own life as being ineffectual, but that all life is futile. As she has gleaned from Emerson's writings, she sees society too is a wave. As such, she sees all of society as dashing itself against

itself. Again, the dualities rise within her. She sees two nations-- one a rock, the other a wave --interlocking in an absurd perpetual confrontation and she foresees no viable end to this absurdity. But the wave only seems ineffectual because it operates from within the maelstrom (Barbie's despair; India's rising anger). It cannot see that everytime it dashes against a rock, one grain of sand breaks away. In time, the wave will shape the rock by its silent, seemingly ineffectual exercise, and the wave itself will be moved by the immensity of its own power.

*

Mabel Layton presides over Pankot like a stone tower, aloof, remote, unapproachable. She has ceased to participate in the raj administration. She spends her days tending her rose garden. Ironically, though Mabel has retreated from society, she could not stand as a better reproof to it:

Her withdrawal was accepted with feelings that lay somewhere between respect and regret; which meant that they were fixed at a point of faint disapproval, therefore seldom expressed, but when they were, an idea would somehow be conveyed of Mrs. Layton's isolation having a meaningful connexion with an earlier golden age which everyone knew had gone but over whose memory she stood guardian, stony-faced and uncompromising. . . .
(Towers, 32)

Mabel's silence is more deafening, more admonishing than if she stood and preached from the church altar. There she stands, silent, above Pankot, watching and waiting.

Into this silence enters Barbie, Mabel's private angel of retribution. Barbie is as much a gift from God to Mabel as Mabel is to Barbie. From among all the inquiries Mabel receives in response to her advertisement for a housemate, she chooses Barbie, a retired missionary. Ostensibly, these two women "should have" nothing in common. But Mabel chooses Barbie and settles her in before there can be any move on the part of the raj to draw Mabel back into the fold, as it were. It seems Mabel pre-supposes Mildred's arrival and thus chooses Barbie to stem the flow of raj society. Although Mildred makes free use of Rose Cottage, it is evident that it is not her home. The lines are finely drawn; nonetheless, they do exist. Barbie herself cannot help but feel like a pawn in this game, but it is not such a dangerous game that Barbie cannot enjoy her new home:

But in the matter of Rose Cottage her [Mildred's] distinction got her nowhere. The elder Mrs. Layton remained impervious to it and something of that imperviousness seemed slowly to rub off on to [Barbie]. It was imagined that the missionary must have asked Mabel outright whether she should go and had been asked to stay put. . . . Subtly she became endowed with some of the attributes of a co-hostess, a member of the family. (Towers, 40)

Mabel's acceptance of Barbie also acts as an admonishment to the Pankot raj: from high above the town, a lonely missionary presides over life below. "The lowest shall rise up, and the highest be cast down."

Barbie may well be the answer to Mabel's own

private sorrow, for Mabel like Barbie also possesses a "private sorrow". Mabel has travelled too far into her silence. She has been silent for too long and although she stands as a constant reminder to those who would sooner forget what they imagined was once a golden age, she is incapable of performing any worthwhile deed without Barbie's help. For Mabel, there is truly "nothing she can do".

*

Without the actuality of Barbie's voice incessantly saying things Barbie thought that Mabel would not have appreciated so much the silence in which she seemed to exist. The only thing Barbie had never told her about was her secret sorrow. When she looked at Mabel. . . she believed Mabel knew about it anyway and had known from the beginning.
(Towers, 95)

Without Barbie's ceaseless chatter, Mabel would not be able to drum out the emptiness and despair pounding inside her. In truth, Mabel wishes she could screech and howl and rant out her own misery, her own secret sorrow, because she has lost her reason for living, and in that, her principles, which gave her anchor, ballast. After Mabel's death, Barbie empathically reflects:

She laughed for her sorrow and . . . presently she was laughing for Mabel because the alternative to laughter was shriek after shriek of wild and lonely despair because Mabel had gone and she had lost her occupation and she saw that was how it was and would always be for everyone.
(Towers, 235)

As a result, then, Mabel is reduced to garbled mutterings and mumblings under the cover of darkness and sleep. (Ironically, she always fails to turn off the light, as if she secretly hopes that some glimmer will pierce through her blackness. Barbie is the one to stand sentinel and turn out the lights.) Mabel's rage against the perpetrators of Jallianwallah is distorted by impotence which is further reduced to meaningless mutterings which Barbie mistakenly interprets as Gillian Waller.

Mabel's life must be a frightful, seemingly endless nightmare. Her days are endless tunnels of silence broken only by Barbie's chatter; her nights are black streams of recurring nightmares from which she cannot rise up and loosen her anguish in a tormented howl. If only she could cry out! but her despair is too deep-seated. Death alone can provide Mabel with, if not relief, at least a release: "The eyes were open and looking directly at the doorway. The mouth was open too and from it a wail of pain and terror was emitting." (Towers, 238)

*

Barbie's removal to Rose Cottage acts as a catharsis for the resolution of two different, yet similar sorrows: within the confines of heaven, sorrow and disappointment dissipate. But the peace which Barbie and Mabel should be enjoying within the gates of paradise is lost for the moment: each has chosen, in her respective pain to contemplate the hell below. The devil must re-

enter paradise before paradise can be set free once again.

Barbie emerges from the depths of unsatisfying servitude (for Barbie had wanted to convert Indians to Christianity, not teach them reading, writing and mathematical skills) into a world of splendour. The irony which escapes Barbie is that here, finally, she can serve the God she had come to India to serve, for Mabel needs Barbie's faith as much as she needs her chatter. Here, then, in Rose Cottage, we find the metaphor for the "real India": the India which is destroying herself through her own consuming despair. Although Barbie feels her God has forsaken her, it is now that He is most with her: He gives Barbie the challenge she always desired, the power to bring a soul back to God.

*

Aziz is the gatekeeper to Paradise. He is the counterpart to E.M. Forster's Dr. Aziz who, in the final pages of *A Passage to India* emerges as the keeper of a very different kind of paradise: a primeval jungle, at once more innocent and more savage than Rose Cottage. This is no rose garden, unless it is replete with thorns:

[Aziz] paused, and the scenery, though it smiled, fell like a gravestone on any human hope. They cantered past a temple to Hanuman -- God so loved the world that he took monkey's flesh upon him -- and past a Saivite temple, which invited to lust but under the semblance of eternity, its obscenities bearing no relation to those of our flesh and blood. They splashed through butterflies and frogs; great trees with leaves like plates rose among the brushwood. The division of daily work

were returning, the shrine had almost shut.
(**Passage**, 315)

Scott's Aziz presides over a different, yet similar, paradise. With Forster, one is always in anticipation of an act not fulfilled; with Scott, paradise is entered, and graphically explored. But, though Scott's Aziz is a seemingly more retiring, more gentle guardian, he is spiritually stronger than Forster's character. Unlike Forster's man whose paradise continues to support the English despite his protestations, Scott's Aziz is very selective about his guests. Without Aziz's approval paradise is inaccessible to all who wish to linger: for Mildred, as for her bridge and drinking partners, (and implicitly, the **raj**) Rose Cottage is only a visitors' lounge: they are not permitted residency. Barbie will be safe here:

. . . she felt quite suddenly that she had passed Aziz's test. "Memsahib, Pankot," he had said. Like a command. And she had looked and said, Praise God. Even if Aziz hadn't heard, or had heard and hadn't understood, the praise on her face must have been unmistakable. (**Towers**, 18)

The magnificence of Rose Cottage does not go unnoticed by Barbie, nor does it escape her that she can now live in a place of both inner and outer beauty. There, ". . . perhaps she would never achieve [it] but there was a sense of tranquillity . . . of serenity, which someone like herself might enter and be touched by, lightly if not deeply." (**Towers**, 28) Barbie will learn to explore the

possibilities and implications of this grandeur so freely given. Of course, the price is her own salvation. For the present, Barbie is only tantalized by the implications:

" . . . she was already in love with the bungalow and garden, . . . and ready to love it more" (Towers, 28).

Barbie was already in love with India. At Rose Cottage, she would learn what kind of love India needed from her.

*

Mabel resides within the gates of Eden, which are jealously guarded by Aziz. She, in turn, works at perfecting the fruits of her labour, yet all the while continues to labour under the weight of a terrible knowledge. Within the gates, Mabel is safe, but she has learned that this is not enough. Her own apotheosis must come from without. Mabel is aware that she must re-open the doors to her paradise; at the same time she must choose her guests wisely. In order to stem the flow against the wrong sort of invasion, Mabel invites Barbie to share her remaining days with her. Mabel must reach through the miasma of deceit and re-erect --somewhere--the integrity that Mabel believed the raj once possessed, but has since allowed to deteriorate. Thus, her garden is at once Rose Cottage and all of India. Her suffering encompasses both worlds: one is only a microcosm of the other. As she looks on with mingled sadness and resignation, she also looks forward to a sharing of her burden. Perhaps from out of this sharing will emerge new

life:

". . . . I think it could do with sharing, but only by someone who appreciates it. I got the feeling. . . . you were the kind of person who would. . . ." [Mabel] glanced at the garden. "It often strikes me as something the gods once loved but forgot should die young and that there's only me left to love it. I'm not here forever and I'm not sure I love it enough. (Towers, 30-31).

In consideration of the special type of labour which is required, Mabel's choice of Barbie is especially astute because "Barbara was born to serve." (Towers, 259). Indeed,

If Mabel had been looking for someone who would make her withdrawal easier, she could not have done better than choose this retired missionary; obviously the kind of person who cried out to be used. . . . (Towers, 67)

Praising paradise, and all the while recognizing the immensity of her task, Barbie remains undaunted in the face of her own encroaching despair, for now she has renewed purpose. At night, she prays, "Help me to serve and, if it is Your will, bring light to the darkness that lies on the soul of Mabel Layton." (Towers, 31). Barbie's renewed commitment to the power of prayer also reveals her commitment to a God and a faith which she can never forsake, and alternatively, does not forsake her. Like a tiny Christian soldier, she renews her assault:

She could feel the prayers falling flat, little rejects from a devotional machine she had once worked to perfection. . . . But she pressed on, head bowed, in the hailstorm. (Towers, 31).

In this very small but dedicated act we find,

ultimately, the fine line which sets Barbie apart from those members of the raj who are in India to feel good, not do it. Much as Barbie may denigrate her own commitments and her accomplishment, one cannot take away her actual achievements. When all is said and done, the fact remains that Barbie persevered for more than thirty years in a useful occupation. She may not have achieved her personal goal of converting Muslim and Hindu children to Christianity, but she has given them something very tangible nonetheless, and much more important. I do not speak of the reading or writing skills; rather, Barbie demonstrated by her own commitment, the resiliency and endurance of the human spirit: to be able to carry on despite one's personal and private sorrows. Her commitment to her work, Scott would suggest, is what gives her the strength to carry on, unlike the unanchored Mabel Layton. Despite having suffered more than Mabel, it is Barbie who takes on the task of righting Mabel's affliction. I believe she would have succeeded if not for the intervening hand of Fate.

It is perhaps as well that Fate does intervene for Barbie would have continued to give herself selflessly to Mabel, disregarding her own needs in favour of serving someone else. Barbie realizes this may well be a flaw in her own character; however, she does nothing to change the fact. She sees that same trait developing in Sarah, and reflects: "...if she's not careful she'll find herself

not living, just helping others to. Perhaps that's all I've ever done." (Towers, 175). Barbie has always been quick to diminish herself, to make herself seem less than what she is. Her father had once said to her, "Barbie, there is a conspiracy among us to make us little." (Towers 341). Barbie continues to reflect on her life:

"So...I huddled into myself. I walked through the streets hunched. I made myself small....when I sailed for India I thought: Now I can be large again. But that has not been possible. (Towers, 342).

If it has not been possible for Barbie to grow in India, it cannot be said that it is entirely her fault. There is a tendency in the British to diminish things in order to better control them. The conspiracy of which Barbie's father speaks is a conspiracy with a view of further perpetuating the class distinctions, and thus ruling by dividing. The English in India complicated the matter further by allowing not only for class distinctions, but racial ones, and further, class distinctions within the racial ones. No sense of union can be accomplished if each party is made to feel inferior, different, separate one from the other. What rules in the end, however, is the power of love. Cliched as that statement may be, it is nonetheless true. With her great capacity for love, Barbie, in the end, budges, and indeed unifies the opposing forces. She crosses the great division which initially separates her from Mabel. Indeed she is more of a ballast in Mabel's life than are

members of Mabel's own family, or for that matter, of Mabel's own class. Despite the fact that Mabel is Pankot's 'grandmother of the regiment', she must look outside of her class for the understanding she craves and the refuge she needs.

It is this type of union which Scott promotes through the entire *Quartet*, and in which Barbie plays a pivotal role. Barbie's kind of love ranks as highly as does Daphne's. "Scott insists on the absolute human value of creative love."⁹ Daphne's love encompasses India as much as it embraces Hari; Barbie's devotion embraces both Mabel, and India. Two different, yet similar people, burned by two different yet similar loves. The *Quartet* is replete with forms of attempted union.

Each of the characters embodying the values of *The Raj Quartet* attempts to cut across either communal, racial, political or psychological barriers to achieve some form of union, usually with or for India and Indians.... Each is betrayed by a combination of political, social and psychological forces. Tragically, the price of love or attempted union is often some form of diminishment, but these characters rarely doubt the rightness or value of their goals and remain, in Daphne's words, "imprisoned but free, diminished by everything that loomed from the outside but not diminished from inside."¹⁰

Therein lies the distinction which Barbie has not yet learned to accept. Her diminished outer life does not in any way diminish the grandeur of her soul. This "soul of a parlour maid" is able to take on at once all the sorrows of India, unlike Mildred's upper-class soul -- Mildred,

who drowns her insecurities behind endless streams of gin. It is fair, and just, then that Barbie presides over Pankot from her celestial surroundings. Heaven waits for those who have learned the power of prayer.

Entering paradise, Barbie's steps are dogged by other-worldly manifestations. Although she had occasionally experienced sensations or emanations previous to removing to Rose Cottage, the experiences are now intensified. One senses an urgency behind these presences which occur more and more frequently as Barbie nears the moment of her apotheosis. It is as if these emanations are directing Barbie to focus her eye inward; Barbie must first face her own despair, her own sense of diminished self, before she can do battle with the real evil which surrounds her, Mabel, Rose Cottage, and India. She must first battle her own impending sense of faithlessness before she can right the wrongs which she feels much too acutely.

Barbie's Devil was not a demon but a fallen angel and his Hell no place of fire and brimstone but an image of lost heaven. There was no soul lonelier than he. His passion for souls was as great as God's but all he had to offer was his own despair. He offered it as boundlessly as God offered love. He was despair as surely as God was love.
(Towers, 98)

Recognition of her tormentor gives Barbie the strength to begin the climb back out of despair. She recognizes that her triumph lies in love; her love allows her to pity the fallen, and to begin her ascent:

"Poor creature," she said. . . "I know who you are and I know you are still here. Please go."

She waited, then caught her breath at the sound of a slow, ungainly winged departure. . . (Towers, 99)

As the moment of her apotheosis nears, Barbie encounters her visions much more frequently, until finally she confronts the devil face to face in the now deserted, transformed shadow of Rose Cottage:

It was coming from there, the sense of presence, of someone in possession and occupation, of something which made the air difficult to breathe. She. . . walked forward, turned the corner and gasped -- both at the sight of a man and at the noxious emanation that lay like an almost visible miasma around the plants along the balustrade which had grown dense and begun to trail tendrils. (Towers, 375)

The scorned yet transfigured child is no longer Barbie, but Ronald Merrick who emerges as a scorched mutation of a man. One side of his body is badly burned; pointedly, it is his left side, his sinister side. His left arm is amputated just above the elbow. He is a burnt offering from Hell: Ronald Merrick, Devil incarnate, has re-entered paradise. Shaken but brave, Barbie "went to confront him". (Towers, 375) Barbie does not meet with resistance or evil: the Devil must first lull his prey into a sense of false security, and Merrick is truly adept at presenting a false face, as the occasion suits:

He let go of the balustrade, clutched the tweed hat at its crumpled crown and began to raise it; and then the nausea and the

apprehension faded, scorched out of her by this courteous gesture. (Towers, 375)

The Devil makes small chatter, lulling Barbie into complacency, all the while inviting confidences. Merrick is the consummate actor.¹¹

It is actually the way Merrick is dressed when Barbie meets him in the ravaged garden. Nothing, outside of popular fiction, could be more calculated to inspire confidence in an old lady from Camberwell. And calculation it is, for the devil is a great conman.¹²

Admittedly, Merrick did not come to Rose Cottage to impress Barbie; rather, he came in search of the Laytons. His clothes, his entry, were all calculated to impress them. However, far be it from Merrick to ever let an occasion to impress anyone slip by. With Barbie, Merrick believes he holds the upper hand. He toys with Barbie, recognizing her soft vulnerabilities, her sense of incomplete self. Under his microscopic manner, she is as exposed as Susan once felt, like lifting a rock and finding something scurrying away from underneath, incomplete, unfinished. In this, he must recognize the very things which make him vulnerable and which he has long since learned to despise in himself as well as others. Sprung as they are from similar backgrounds, they have travelled and grown worlds apart. Despite all his wordliness, then, it is Barbie who, in the end, presides over the encounter. In her soft, bumbling Barbie-way, Barbie is more than a match for Merrick/devil/conman: her

ingenuousness, her innocence make the devil's house fold like a house of cards around him.

Barbie's ability to reach into someone's soul is never more eloquently done, nor put to better test than it is with Merrick. Rather than her senses being dulled by Merrick's seductive behaviour, they are heightened, for intuitively, Barbie confronts Merrick with the very thing which he will **not** be able to "carry off". She strikes through his mask and exposes him for the imposter he is. Merrick has always surrounded himself with an aura of, if not authority, at least power. He gives the impression he is always in control. Merrick uses this power to gain acceptance into a world to which he craves to belong; more than anything, Merrick wishes to infiltrate the ranks of the **raj** and be accepted as an equal. No other person has yet been able to discourage Merrick from such a useless venture. It is Barbie who shows him he will never be able to "carry it off". Try as he might, Merrick will never fit in.

From her trunk, Barbie takes out her picture of the Jewel in the Crown, the picture which exemplifies the **man-bap** principles upon which the **raj** had built its illusory Empire. She offers it to Merrick. He is coaxed into acceptance. Interestingly, Barbie forces Merrick to accept the picture with his artificial limb, suggesting perhaps that the principles which are therein displayed are as lifeless as his dead limb.

She held it up to him. He made to take it. "No," she said. "The other hand." . . . The black glove, his good hand and one of her hands held the picture. Slowly they each withdrew the support of their living flesh.

"There, you can do it. You can **carry** it." There was perspiration on his mottled forehead. He gazed down at the awkwardly angled gift.

"Oh, this," he said. "Yes, I remember this. Are you giving it to me?"

"Of course."

One eyebrow contracted in a frown. The other-vestigial-perhaps contracted too. (Towers, 387)

Merrick is puzzled, perhaps even dismayed, although it does not yet occur to him why he is so uncomfortable. When he asks Barbie why she gives him this gift, Barbie replies:

"One should always share one's hopes. That represents one of the unfulfilled ones. Oh, not the gold and scarlet uniforms, not the pomp, not the obeisance. We've had all that and plenty. We've had everything. . . except what got left out."

"What was that. . .?"

"I call it the unknown Indian. He isn't **there**. So the picture isn't finished."

(Towers, 388)

This passage is replete with ironies, some of the sweetest which Scott probably ever delivered. It is useless, of course, to share one's hopes with Ronald Merrick. He makes his living destroying people's hopes. Merrick is all form and no substance: machinery of power set in motion by brain and sinew, but with no blood, no heart. The double irony is that Merrick has no use for people's hopes. What he craves is the pomp and circumstance -- and the obeisance, all of which Barbie dismisses as extraneous, as

superfluous. Barbie points out to Merrick that the unknown Indian is missing. Ironically, the unknown Indian is rotting in any of a dozen prisons across India because Ronald Merrick has placed him/them there. For Barbie, then, the story isn't finished. For Merrick, it ended long ago and he would sooner forget.

In the end, it seems Merrick is unable to uphold the charade for which he longed. Principles are more weighty than they appear at a distance:

A drop of sweat fell from his forehead on to the bottom left hand corner of the glass. . .
"Let me relieve you of its weight,
Captain Merrick."
(Towers, 388)

Barbie reached through to the other side of Merrick and exposed what no one else could. Her trial by fire successfully completed, Barbie prepares to cross through to the other side of life. Her head swathed in the butterfly lace "like a bridal veil", she climbs into the tonga where her trunk was roped, "upended like a coffin on its foot." (Towers, 388)

As Barbie climbs into the tonga, she embarks on her final journey. At the milestone, half way down Club Road, everything is revealed: lightning flashes, the sky explodes, the horse screams, the brakes burn and Barbie, for the last time, raises her voice in song -- her gesture at once a mixture of defiance and praise: to live lustily is not a crime. Like Daphne, Barbie could say that at least a moment or two before she died, she had "been awake

and alive".

It is a comfort to the reader to know that in the end Barbie was aware of her strength. Having travelled through life with a "small" sense of self (even her name is a diminutive), she moved towards her death knowing that she **had** become large again. Scott makes the nice distinction: after Barbie's revelations, he no longer addresses her as Barbie, but as "Miss Batchelor". The sisters in the hospital and her visitors still address her by the diminutive perhaps because they can only see the outer "diminished" Barbie and not the Barbie whose soul is in act of transcendence. (As Barbie herself remarked at an earlier time in referring to Susan Layton, she is not out of her mind, she has entered it.) -- and once --only once-- does Scott himself remember her as Barbie, but it seems that he recalls the name wistfully, affectionately, as one addressing an old friend. Before she surrendered to her silence, ~~then, Barbie was aware and proud, and at peace,~~ with her fierce accomplishment:

She opened her eyes and saw the toy-like happy danger of human life on earth, which was an apotheosis of a kind, and she knew that God had shone His light on her at last by casting first the shadow of the prince of darkness across her feet. . . . Ah! she said. . . I have been through Hell and come out again by God's mercy. (Towers, 392)

Barbie's retreat into silence does not in any way echo Mabel's desperate resignation. Mabel fled from her conscience; Barbie retreats into hers. All her life,

Barbie had been drowning the strength of her convictions through her endless rivers of talk. Not that she ever had much to say, because, as is so often the case with "small" people, anything of importance happens inside because they are afraid of letting their sensibilities show. In any case, "Everything happens in the mind, whatever the source." (Towers, 205) (Barbie is even self-deprecating about her good health: "I've always enjoyed excessive good health which I suppose is rather indecent, a sign of diminished sensibility, a certain coarseness of constitution." (Towers, 194) She feels slightly ashamed of her good fortune.) But, more than this, Barbie intuitively knows that her chatter is a stop against some more important happening; Barbie has always been the one to fill the empty air waves, this being especially true after she moves in with Mabel, so she rarely has the opportunity to reflect while others talk. She is given the opportunity at Susan's wedding/birthday party. In the crush of the crowd, Barbie realizes how she has drowned her inner life:

[I]t is to be talked to that I want above anything. I want to create around myself a condition of silence so that it may be broken, but not by me. But I am surrounded by a condition of Babel. To this all my life; I have contributed enough for a dozen people. And He stops His ears and leaves us to get on with it.
(Towers, 196)

This moment at the party is cathartic in that Barbie will actively seek to lessen her chatter hereafter, but it is not an isolated incident. For a long time Barbie had felt

that her talk, her prayers spoken out loud, were getting between her and her inner peace, between her and God:

God, she felt, had waited a long time for her to see that she could ignore the burden of her words which mounted one upon the other until they toppled, only to be set up again, and again, weighting her shoulders; a long time for her consciously to enter the private realm of inner silence and begin to learn how to inhabit it even while her body went its customary way and her tongue clacked endlessly on.
(Towers, 191)

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Near the end of her life, Barbie closed off the lines of communication to the outer world. She needed time to reflect, and for several months she only communicated on paper. She drank only water and ate only bread because they "were clean." (Towers, 393) In those final months, she cleansed both body and soul in ritual purification. On August 6, 1945, an echo shattered the world. It would have been impossible to tell whether the illness ended or began with Barbie. Did she raise an admonitory finger to warn against the impending blow, or did she raise it to hush the children that they might better hear the echoes of their lives falling away before them?

*

"I am not ill, Thou art not ill. He, She or It is not ill. We are not ill, You are not ill, They are all well. Therefore. . . " Therefore, take me up, I won't let go, she seemed to say and still be saying. In the shape of a tortured woman, the truth lies: the echo of her life

made no further sound.

*

In the shape of a tortured woman, India lay bloodied and scarred; England began her retreat, equally bloodied. Like Barbie, each had attempted to drown the integrity of their inner lives by clamouring a little too loudly one against the other. Unlike Barbie, in the end neither India nor England relinquished gracefully. It was not an ending of which either side could be proud. It remains to be seen what fruit the river-crossers will yield.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. K. Bhaskara Rao, **Paul Scott** (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 100.
2. Christopher Hitchens, "A Sense of Mission" (*Grand Street* 1985 Winter; 4(2)) 185.
3. Hitchens, "A Sense of Mission" 184.
4. Hitchens, "A Sense of Mission" 184-185.
5. Hitchens, "A Sense of Mission" 185.
6. Paul Scott, "After Marabar: Britain and India, A Post-Fosterian View", **My Appointment with the Muse: Essays 1961-1975**, ed. Shelley C. Reece (London: Heineman, 1986) 192.
7. Hitchens, "A Sense of Mission" 192.
8. Francine S. Weinbaum, "Paul Scott's India: The Raj Quartet", *Critique* 20(1) 1978 102.
9. Weinbaum, "Paul Scott's India: The Raj Quartet" 103.
10. Weinbaum, "Paul Scott's India: The Raj Quartet" 103.
11. Janis Tedesco and Janet Popham, **Introduction to the Raj Quartet**, (Boston: University of America Press, 1985) 15-16.
12. Tedesco and Popham, 172.

CHAPTER III

You understand what I am telling you?
That MacGregor and Bibighar are the place
of the white and the place of the black.
To get from one to the other you could
not cross by a bridge but had to take your
courage in your hands and enter the flood
and let yourself be taken with it, lead
where it may. This is a courage Miss
Manners had.

. . . [Miss Manners] realized that it was
no good waiting for a bridge to be built,
but a question of entering the flood, and
meeting **there**, letting the current take
them both. It is as if she said to herself:
Well, life is not just a business of
standing on dry land and occasionally
getting your feet wet. It is merely an
illusion that some of us stand on one
bank and some on the opposite. So long as
we stand like that we are not living at
all, but dreaming. So jump, jump in, and
let the shock wake us up. Even if we drown
at least for a moment or two before we die
we shall be awake and alive.

(Sister Ludmila, *The Jewel in the Crown*,
150-151)

*

Apart from the sustained metaphor of the towers
which are upheld by Scott's middle-aged women, there is
another symbol which flows and weaves its way amidst the
interconnected histories of *The Raj Quartet*: Scott makes
protracted use of water imagery, again most often
sustained by his older women. It is Daphne Manners who
envisions the merging of the races by taking one's life in
one's hands and mingling with the flood of humanity, but

it is through Sister Ludmila (yet another middle-aged visionary) that Daphne's vision is first directly associated with water. (Jewel, 151)

Daphne "bashes on" (as Lili Chatterjee would say) with the courage and strength of youth, seeking for a union, not on one side or the other, but half-way across. As both sides converge against her, Daphne is drowned. But before she surrenders, she sets free her little prisoner who is destined to swim upstream, crossing against the current like a tiny flower from across the Lethe. Like Susan's Edward, Daphne's child undergoes ritual baptism. Water purifies Parvati as surely as fire purified Edward. As leaders of a new generation each must reunite with the past by observing the ancient rites of passage. Like a tiny Moses, Parvati is destined to attract the attention of the Pharaoh's daughter and emerge as a leader of her race. To this end, the irony comes full circle as Parvati wins Lady Ethel Manners' heart; Mabel Layton may have been grandmother to the regiment but Ethel Manners is the Queen Mother. It is fitting and just that Parvati be instructed by the wise Lady who lives, not near or beside the water, but on it. Ironically, and despite Daphne's untimely death, Parvati could not have a more auspicious beginning to her life.

*

Because Lady Manners dwells within the periphery of the interwoven tales within *The Quartet*, her strength

does not, at first, impress us as greatly as it should. In fact, the reader is initially lulled into believing that Ethel Manners is only secondary to this story -- that her tale was told and her life was lived long before this story ever began. Admittedly, because of her years, Ethel Manners' history is exactly that -- a history -- something which she lived and experienced before the present story comes into focus. But a history is much more than a series of events which occurred in the past, as Scott asserts. History is as much the past as it is the present; and, as it turns and changes with us at every moment, it is also our future. "The one thing one cannot escape in life is its continuity." The belief in this premise allows us, then, to see just how luminescent one of Scott's "minor" characters really is, how she is able to shine through from generation to generation, and transcend the past into the future.

*

Despite the early connection that is established with her niece, Daphne, Lady Manners attracts very little attention. Indeed, throughout the novels she remains an obscure, spectre-like figure who only gains questionable prominence after Daphne's death. Even so, she remains in the shadows. We catch glimpses of her, now and then through the few letters she sends to Lili Chatterjee, through a few brief inner monologues, and through the eyes of Barbie and Sarah who are alternately attracted to and

seduced by the mystery and aura which surrounds Ethel. For one of which so very little is known, it is at first difficult to understand why *The Quartet* resounds with her presence. I therefore suggest that Ethel's presence is much more mystical (or religious, in the true sense of the word) than any other individual in the novels. She achieves in life the spirituality which only Barbie at the time of her death is able to achieve.

This spirituality permeates the novels throughout, and now and then infiltrates the ranks of the raj. Barbie, by some pure instinct, or through some sort of elemental connection with Ethel is aware of Ethel's mystical self. As Barbie herself is pulled more frequently into mystical experiences, she is able to connect with Ethel, or at least, Ethel's presence. After Teddie Bingham's memorial service, Ethel is seen to move ghost-like in the background of events: mysteriously, a guest book is signed at Flagstaff House; a limousine with shades drawn overtakes someone on Club Road; Barbie sees Ethel in prayer; later, Sarah also meets Ethel in the church. Intuitively, Barbie reflects: "It was as though she [Ethel] wished to say: I am here in your midst, think about it." (Towers, 208) As long as she is alive, Ethel seems to say, she will not let the raj forget. But forget what? Ethel does not address merely the memory of her niece, but rather all the larger events which lead up to that fateful moment for poor Daphne and Hari, and for the

events which follow and will shape the future of Parvati, and indeed of India. Mistakenly, Barbie believes Ethel "has made herself one of them", meaning, of course, one of the Indians. But Ethel is one of "them" in the larger sense also -- of the Indians and the English. Ethel is only partisan to the human question, not to the colour-coded affair which runs underneath all the events which have thus far undermined the Indian/English relationship. Ethel is painfully aware that colour and class matter, that, to quote Ronald Merrick, "it matters like hell". She wishes it could be otherwise, because she for one, has always lived by a different code of mores:

What terrifies me is the thought that gradually, when the splendours of civilised divorce and protestations of continuing as good friends are worked out, the real animus will emerge, the one both our people just managed to keep in check. . . . I mean of course the dislike and fear that exists between black and white. . . . I suppose everything gets stripped down to that in the end, because that is the last division of all, isn't it? The colour of the skin, I mean. . . . Well, you and I have always tried to keep open house. (Jewel, 476-477)

What is perhaps interesting to explore is the notion that Scott might be suggesting that the type of morals which Ethel lives by (and also Lili) have sprung from a different time -- that perhaps the moral continuum is broken, or at the very least, battered and bruised by constant friction. Perhaps there was a time when people treated each other with dignity and respect, a time when

Nello Chatterjee and Henry Manners could meet on a more equal footing. On several occasions, Ethel conjures a living portrait of "the best" of the past. Scott paints a final portrait of Lady Manners:

Picture her then, an old lady dressed in a fawn tweed jacket and skirt, a high collar to a cream silk blouse that is buttoned with mother-of-pearl . . . reclining safely, propped against the back rest, . . . there is an air about her of faded Edwardian elegance, Victorian even; . . . and the early morning mist swathed in the mountains and above the lake, the movement of the boat, the pointed paddles dipping and sweeping, the totem figure of Suleiman, . . . all combine to make, as it were, a perpetual willow-pattern of the transient English experience of outlandish cultures. (Scorpion, 57)

Later, this Edwardian twilight echoes in our minds when Clark says to Sarah that he'd met a family who had been preserved in some sort of perpetual Edwardian sunlight. (Scorpion, 457) One conjures a vision of Lady Manners caught in this shaft of light. Later still, Ethel herself reminds us that "behind the window, the shop is as nineteenth-century as ever". Finally, it appears all the principal players of any conscience hearken back to an earlier time. Certainly both Mabel and Barbie are out of step with the 20th century. Even poor Edwina Crane is tied to an earlier time and place, as Barbie recalls:

My poor Edwina sat huddled by the roadside in the rain, holding that dead man's hand. . . For me that image is like an old picture, the kind that were popular in the last century, which told stories and pointed moral

lessons. I see the caption, Too Late.
(Towers, 208)

But, just as there is "the best" of the past, so too can one expect "the worst". Ronald Merrick craves the pomp and circumstance and obeisance which is so colourfully depicted in Barbie's painting. There is a sense then, not of a solitary shaft of light, but of a prism reflecting all the different as well as lesser aspects of one major light, one ideal, which when broken into its separate selves falls far short of the sum of all its parts. Sadly, the images can only be reflected one against the other, they can never co-mingle or re-integrate into that original light. Despite this sense of fragmented past, however, it seems as though Scott is continuously turning our eye inward, or perhaps more appropriately, backward, to one facet of that light that just might be able to recapture at least an essence of the original ray which was lost. Certainly it seems that Ethel Manners wishes to escape the twentieth century altogether when she writes to Lili that she is leaving Rawalpindi:

I have decided to leave 'Pindi.
I refuse to live in a place whose
people at the stroke of a pen will
be turned into enemies of India --
the country my husband tried to serve
-- and you can count on it that 'enemy'
isn't over-stating the case. The
creation of Pakistan is our crowning
failure. I can't bear it. . . Our only
justification for two hundred years of
power was unification. But, we've
divided one composite nation into two.
(Jewel, 473)

But Scott does not turn the eye inward (or backward) in order that it may rest there and contemplate perpetual misery from within. Once again he voices his belief in the moral continuum of affairs -- only by looking backward can one look forward to positive change. By assessing the mistakes of the past, one will not, hopefully, be doomed to repeat them.

This is why it is so important to carry one's baggage along the whole length of the journey. As Barbie showed, the time will come when the traveller will know it is time to divest oneself of the baggage.

Ethel knows, and seemingly has always known the value of packing up the past and carrying the history forward for the benefit of the next generation. Just as she packed up Henry's possessions long ago, and as she did with Daphne's, so too does she pack up her memories to carry forward. When she is finally able to put Daphne's and Hari's history to rest in that small room in the Kandipat jail, she finds herself speaking aloud:

But it isn't the best we should remember . . . We must remember the worst is the lives we lead, the best is only our history, and between our history and our lives there is this vast dark plain where the rapt and patient shepherds drive their invisible flocks in expectation of God's forgiveness. (*Scorpion*, 315)

It is perhaps this sentiment that Scott attempts to convey in many ways and facets in **The Quartet**. The worst part of the journey is the lives we lead; the best part is the

history, because it is always glorified. Life then must be a struggle of re-assimilation between these two conflicting realities. The notion that the English were trapped in a shaft of perpetual Edwardian sunlight is an easy metaphor for the selective conscience of a race. In the end, and for most people it is more palatable to remember this way, illusory as it may be.

Ethel Manners stands out dramatically from this crowd. She cannot, and does not, accept the terms which are dictated to her. Small as her gesture seems, her retreat from the land which is destined to become Pakistan nonetheless speaks of her commitment to the morality which has sustained her thus far. What is also evident in her small but meaningful gesture is that Ethel speaks out against the moral failures of the raj. Mrs. Moore did not, nor does Mabel Layton, in any real sense. (Mabel's actions are covert and anonymous.) Edwina's stand stemmed from ~~despair and resulted in only a tragic ending.~~ Even Barbie does not rank with Ethel in this respect. In actuality, Ethel's spirit is more akin to Daphne's -- and to Sarah Layton's. Ethel embodies a certain positive force, an outlook which speaks more of her commitment to the future than it does of a simple loyalty to the past. She embodies the best part of what Scott speaks in terms of assimilating one's history. Also like Daphne and Sarah, Ethel is willing to accept that she as an individual is not entirely blameless of the actions perpetrated by the

English against the Indians; she does not speak of "them" when referring to the raj, but of "we". Ethel dispels, in one breath, both the mystery of culpability and the mystique of that moral Edwardian rectitude:

I see **nothing** in India that will withstand the pressure of the legacy of the division we English have allowed her to impose on herself, and are morally responsible for. In allowing it we created a precedent for partition just at the moment when the opposite was needed, allowed it . . . as a result of tiredness and failing moral and physical pretensions that just wouldn't stand the strain of looking into the twentieth century to see what abdication on India's terms instead of ours was going to mean. Perhaps finally we had no terms of our own because we weren't clever enough to formulate them in twentieth century dress, and so the world is going to divide itself into isolated little pockets of dogma and mutual resistance and the promise that always seemed to lie behind even the worst aspects of our colonialism will just evaporate into history as imperial mystique, foolish glorification of a savagely practical and greedy policy. (Jewel, 475-476)

Although Mabel is not the most prominent woman to emerge from *The Quartet*, she is certainly the strongest, and the wisest. There is a certain therapeutic or healing element to her words. Her small pockets of speech, scattered sparsely throughout the four novels, are each and every one replete with little wisdoms. Sarah Layton may not have initially understood just how right she was when she said to Ethel "What a lot you know", because Sarah laboured under a misapprehension of what kind of knowledge Ethel possessed. Sarah re-evaluates her words when she

later re-encounters Ethel in the church:

Why, what a lot you know, . . . what a lot, what a terrible, terrible lot. But now I know some of it too, and know that this kind of knowing isn't knowing but bowing my head, as you are bowing yours, under the weight of it. (Scorpion, 493)

Yet, much as she labours under the weight of knowingness, Ethel embodies a great resiliency. Her thoughts and actions are very fluid -- she falls and rises with the tides of change making life appear effortless. One imagines her as a great towering wave being pushed, and then she pushing back with equal if not greater force, having gained strength from her retreat. Indeed, Ethel weathers many storms, the greatest of which is her decision to raise Daphne's illegitimate child, whose conception was less than auspicious. Her strength is devastating in the face of such odds because the raj wishes nothing better than to forget "that awful business about [her] niece". To have chosen such a path for herself and Parvati belies in itself the strength Ethel possesses: she owns enough moral courage to sustain her own strength and then plenty left over to impart it to Parvati, and allow her to grow into the fine young woman she becomes by the end of *The Quartet*.

Ethel vanishes from the novels as quickly, as silently as she first appears. There is no sense of a real beginning, nor of an ending -- only of continuity. Ethel does not die "on screen" as the movie viewers might say,

so one has a sense that Ethel has always been and always will be there. Appropriately, she fades back into the fabric of the novels, leaving behind her only a sense of presence. This is certainly "the best" of what Scott intended: to live and leave a mark, but not to scar the surface of what has been left behind.

EPILOGUE

The spirit of the **raj** lived and died within the breast of one emotionally scarred eunuch -- for indeed Ronald Merrick was as much a middle-aged woman as any herein addressed. But, he of course, was the worst of what the **raj** offered. He truly was the lickspittle of the **raj** -- the worst kind of tyrant and bully, who attacked his enemies from behind the skirts of a menacing system which protected her own with feline viciousness thinly disguised as matriarchal solicitude. And though Merrick was hardly the apple of his mother's eye, the **raj**'s long protective arm also embraced him. Ethel Manners makes us sadly aware of Merrick's immunity when she reflects to Nigel Rowan that she knows nothing can touch Merrick -- that Merrick is safeguarded against any recriminations. In many unfortunate ways, then, it is Merrick who is the embodiment of the last days of the Empire -- neither male, nor female, a poor, scarred, perverted excuse for a human being, Merrick limped his way into a bloody, bloody ending, much as England did with India.

Unlike Merrick, however, England could, hopefully, redeem herself with the essence that reigned behind the spirit -- the love that emanated from such strengths as

Daphne Manners and Sarah Layton; and the love and worldly wisdom embodied by such as Barbara Batchelor and Lady Ethel Manners. The mystery of the middle-aged English woman in India as representative of the Empire is not nearly so mysterious when it is placed within the context set above. There are those such as Merrick who turn everything sour; and there are those such as Lady Manners who try to keep an equilibrium and who keep a moral faith no matter how adverse the conditions, nor how bleak the future may at first appear. What the best of these women embody, however, is not so much the morality, but the continuity: like Barbie, the ability to persevere; and, against formidable odds, like Lady Manners, who, having chosen a difficult path, held her head proudly and served as a reprimand to those who would rather forget:

My own race hardly knows any longer what to make of me and the existence of the child under my roof no doubt ranks as something of a scandal, such a lively, vocal repository for memories of events my countrymen are pretending it is best to forget. (Scorpion, 53)

Like Mabel, whose falling tower sent recurring shock waves through the *raj*, like Barbie who held up one admonishing finger to the entire world, Ethel set up a tower of her own in the living, breathing spirit of Parvati, "lest they forget."

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