

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
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(Murray 019, Tuesdays 2:30–4:30)

November 17, 2016. Anand (2).

review: geographic analogies

- ▶ the periphery (Faulkner's South, Toomer's South)
 - ▶ bad infrastructure
 - ▶ power elsewhere; law replaced by force; rigid social hierarchies
 - ▶ overflow, grotesquerie, life with the dead
- ▶ the colony
 - ▶ “civilization” belied by visible coercion (military)
 - ▶ color lines
 - ▶ “colonial mimicry” (Bhabha): Conrad's “improved specimen”
 - ▶ uneven development (modernization, but spotty)
 - ▶ multilingualism, stratified

review: Anglophone position

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It is to the directness of his attack that Mr. Anand's success is probably due. (Forster, introduction, v)

Indians, like most Orientals, are refreshingly frank; they have none of our complexes about functioning. (vi)

By caste he is a Kshatriya, and he might have been expected to inherit the pollution-complex....He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment. (vii)

Anglophone ambivalence

The man, a fair-complexioned Muhammadan dressed in the most smartly-cut English suit he had ever seen, interrupted him:

‘Eh, eh, black man, come here. Go and get a bottle of soda-water for the sahib.’...

‘*Ham desi sahib* (I, native sahib), don’t stare at me,’ said the man deliberately using the wrong Hindustani spoken by the English, but becoming kinder for a moment. (150–51)

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The harangue was impressive, with such fire was it delivered. Not only was the crowd moved but the anglicised Indian was silenced. (153)

‘If only [Bakha thinks] that ‘gentleman’ hadn’t dragged the poet away.’ (156)

caste system, cont.

- ▶ endogamy, hereditary occupations, ritual hierarchy
- ▶ varṇa (“class”/estate): Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra
- ▶ jāti (“birth [group]”): kin/tribe/communal group
 - ▶ late 1800s: British Census puts all jātis in a varṇa
 - ▶ caste as putative “essence” of Hindu India
- ▶ those outside the system:
 - ▶ “outcaste” or “untouchable”
 - ▶ harijan (Gandhi)
 - ▶ Scheduled Castes (1935, 1950 Constitution)
 - ▶ Dalit (contemporary)

another affiliation

In the world of that time, it was not possible for the voice of the rejected to be heard. (Anand in a [Library of Congress](#) recording)

proletarian fiction

- Feodor Gladkov, *Cement* (1925)
- Mike Gold, *Jews without Money* (1929)
- Agnes Smedley, *Daughter of Earth* (1929)
- Kobayashi Takiji, *The Factory Ship* (1929)
- Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929)
- Quayaquil group, *Those That Leave* (1930)
- Jacques Roumain, *The Bewitched Mountain* (1931)
- Sajjad Zaheer et al., *Angaaray* (1932)
- Patrícia Galvão, *Industrial Park* (1933)
- Paul Nizan, *Antoine Bloyé* (1933)
- Yi Kiyong, *Hometown* (1934)
- Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935)
- C.L.R. James, *Minty Alley* (1936)

the artist of the proletariat?

To produce pure proletarian art the artist must be at one with the worker; this is impossible, not for political reasons, but because the artist never is at one with any public.

(William Empson, "Proletarian Literature," □ in *Some Versions of Pastoral* [1935])

novel problems

Several challenges...: the attempt to represent **working-class life** in a genre that had developed as the quintessential narrator of bourgeois or middle-class manners, kin structures, and social circles; the attempt to represent a **collective subject** in a form built around the interior life of the individual; the attempt to create a **public, agitational work** in a form that, unlike drama, depended on private, often domestic consumption.

(Michael Denning, “The Novelists’ International” [2002])

public, agitational

Sad and wistful, she heaved a soft sigh and felt something in her heart asking for mercy. The sun overhead shot down bright arrows of heat, and inspired a feeling of the passing of time....And yet no caste Hindu seemed to be near....‘Oh, Maharaj! Maharaj! Won’t you draw us some water, please?’ (26)

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He knew if the little one told his mother that his elder brother was teaching a sweeper to read, she would fly into a rage and turn the poor boy out of the house. He knew her to be a pious Hindu lady. (40–41)

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‘Do you know you have touched me and defiled me, you cockeyed son of a bow-legged scorpion! Now I will have to go and take a bath to purify myself.’ (46)

‘This dirty dog bumped right into me! So unmindfully do these sons of bitches walk in the streets! He was walking along without the slightest effort at announcing his approach, the swine!’ (47)

the politics of untouchability

'I shall only speak about the so-called "Untouchables," whom the government tried to alienate from Hinduism by giving them a separate legal and political status.' (146)

These political demands of the Untouchables have been the subject matter of great controversy between the Untouchables and the Hindus. Mr. Gandhi, the friend of the Untouchables, preferred to fast unto death [in the 1932 Pune *satyagraha*] rather than consent to them and although he yielded he is not reconciled to the justice underlying these demands. (B.R. Ambedkar in 1943)

democracy and caste

The Hindu has no will to equality. His inclination and his attitude are opposed to the democratic doctrine of one man one value. Every Hindu is a social Tory and political Radical. Mr Gandhi is no exception to this rule. He presents himself to the world as a liberal but his liberalism is only a very thin veneer which sits very lightly on him as dust does on one's boots. You scratch him and you will find that underneath his liberalism he is a blue blooded Tory. He stands for the cursed caste. He is a fanatic Hindu upholding the Hindu religion. (Ambedkar)

discussion: Gandhi's speech

1. Consider the sentences in the segment on 148 one at a time, and explain what it tells us about Gandhi's, Bakha's, and Anand's (different) views. Some (not all) of the themes that may be relevant to individual sentences: the role of Hinduism; the role of Indian nationalism; the role of colonialism; the responsibility of the upper castes; the responsibility of untouchables.
2. *How are views represented and related to one another by the text? What techniques does the novel use to shape your interpretation of Gandhi's remarks and of Bakha's responses? Challenge one another to point to individual phrases or sentences in this passage to support what you say.*
3. In light of the political themes of the book and the way in which the novel depicts Bakha's experiences, are we to understand Gandhi's speech as offering a real solution to the problems Bakha experiences?

next

- ▶ Anand wrap-up
- ▶ Hurston: focus on the first half (through 99)
- ▶ commonplace from Hurston