

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

November 15. Anand, *Untouchable* (2).

Andrew Goldstone
andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu
CA: Octavio R. Gonzalez
octavio@eden.rutgers.edu

<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~ag978/355/>

Papers

Paper 2 due November 26

Think ahead about topic and argument

Plan when you will write and revise

Review

Peripheral situations

geography, social hierarchy, mess, danger, impurity

and: the problem of realism vs. technique

Review

Anand's Affiliations: Bloomsbury

The double-edged sword of metropolitan recognition

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

E.M. Forster, introduction to *Untouchable*

Review

Anand, Joyce and peripheral urban zones

Joyce on the colonizer's language

Untouchable: an Anglophone text from a multilingual world

footnotes, in-text notes

“Bhangi! (Sweeper) Bhangi!” (81)

That was a Hindu custom, Bakha knew. (53)

but also: defamiliarizations

Yessuh Messih (128)

Some background

1. Caste

varṇa (“class”/estate): Brāhman, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra

outside the system: “outcaste” or “untouchable”

harijan (Gandhi); Scheduled Castes (1935, 1950); Dalit

jāti (“birth [group]”): kin/tribe/communal group (1000s)

bhaṃgī (the sweeper group) is a jāti

British Census puts all jātis in a varṇa

Is caste the “essence” of Hindu India?

Some background

2. Independence struggle

1828 Brahma Samaj founded; Bengal Renaissance begins

1857 Sepoy rebellion (“The Mutiny”); direct British control

1875 Arya Samaj founded (Hindu revivalism)

1885 Indian National Congress founded

1906 All-India Muslim League founded

1914 M.K. Gandhi returns to India after S.African activism

1919 Repression (Rowlatt Acts); Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

1920 All-India Trade Union Congress; CP of India

1921 Non-cooperation movement

Some background

2. Independence struggle

1925 B.R. Ambedkar begins untouchable activist campaign

1925 Gandhi declares against untouchability

1932 Gandhi vs. Ambedkar on untouchable representation

1935 India Act (limited autonomy)

1936 All-India Progressive Writers Association

1942 Quit India movement launched by Gandhi

1947 Independence and Partition of India and Pakistan

1950 Indian Constitution

“Indo-Anglian”

1864 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Rajmohan's Wife*

1874 Lal Behari Day, *Govinda Samanta or Bengal Peasant Life*

1901 Kipling, *Kim*

1905 Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain, “Sultana’s Dream”

1910 M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (English version)

1913 Rabindranath Tagore wins Nobel Prize in Literature
(for the English version of *Gitanjali*)

1924 Forster, *Passage to India*

1927 K.S.Venkataramani, *Murugan, The Tiller*

1935 R.K. Narayan, *Swami and Friends*

1938 Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*

1946 J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

1948 G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*

Anglophone

1954 K. Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve*

1956 K. Singh, *Train to Pakistan*

1963 A. Desai, *Cry, the Peacock*

1980 S. Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

1988 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*

1993 V. Seth, *A Suitable Boy*

1997 A. Roy, *The God of Small Things*

...

Anglophone

This is it: the prose writing—both fiction and non-fiction—created in this period by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a more interesting body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen “official languages” of India, the so-called vernacular languages, during the same time....

English has become an Indian language. Its colonial origins mean that, like Urdu and unlike all other Indian languages, it has no regional base; but in all other ways, it has emphatically come to stay.

Salman Rushdie (1997)

Anglophone?

Can it be true that Indian writing, that endlessly rich, complex and problematic entity, is to be represented by a handful of writers who write in English, who live in England or America and whom one might have met at a party...?

Amit Chaudhuri, introduction to *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature* (2004)

Anglophone?

In present-day India, surely, English occupies a much more contradictory space: as simultaneously a language for the production of knowledge, a means of connecting the country with currents around the world, both good and bad, and as a line of demarcation, a cultural boundary between privilege and dispossession; for many among the literati, it is also the language of Raj nostalgia.

Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (1992)

Discussion

There was only one queer voice which dissented from all this. (150)

‘Ha, ha, ho ho! but what has all this got to do with untouchability?’ (154)

What does the depiction of R.N. Bashir suggest about the capacities and limitations of adopting Anglophone culture for an Indian intellectual in 1935?

Affiliation

“The voice of all the rejected was not being heard”

Anand, 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, *Angare* (1932) [suppressed by British gov't]
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)

Proletarian Fiction

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)

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.

E.M. Forster, introduction to *Untouchable*

Proletarian Fiction

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)

Proletarian Fiction

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)

Public, agitational

‘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)

Public, agitational

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)

Public, agitational

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)

Public, agitational

Bakha felt thrilled to the very marrow of his bones. That the Mahatma should want to be born as an outcaste! That he should love scavenging!...

‘If there are any Untouchables here,’ he heard the Mahatma say, ‘they should realise that they are cleaning Hindu society.’ (He felt like shouting to say that he, an Untouchable, was there, but he did not know what the Mahatma meant by ‘cleaning Hindu society.’)

Discussion

'In order to emancipate themselves they have to purify themselves'....

He wanted to forget the last passages that he had heard.

(148)

What is the political significance of (a) the Mahatma's demand (b) Bakha's response to it (c) Anand's representation of both?

Debate form

‘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

Debate form

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

Interior life

As the brief Indian twilight came and went, a sudden impulse shot through the transformations of space and time, and gathered all the elements that were dispersed in the stream of his soul into a tentative decision: 'I shall go and tell father all that Gandhi said about us,' he whispered to himself, 'and all that that poet said. Perhaps I can find the poet some day and ask him about his machine.' (157)

Interior life

He stood lost for a moment, confused in the shimmering rays, feeling as though there were nothing but the sun, the sun, everywhere, in him, on him, before him and behind him...As he emerged from the world of that rare, translucent lustre into which he had been lifted, he stumbled over a stone and muttered a curse. (34)

His wealth of unconscious experience, however, was extraordinary. It was a kind of crude sense of the world, in the round, such as the peasant has who can do the job while the laboratory agriculturalist is scratching his head. (94)

Collective subject

A superb specimen of humanity he seemed whenever he made the high resolve to say something, to go and do something, his fine form rising like a tiger at bay. (65)

Next week

Classes on Monday and Tuesday

Read as much Hurston as you can. Focus on the first half (through p. 99).