

Book Reviews

Amritjit Singh, Rajiva Verma, Irene M. Joshi, eds., *Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979: A Guide to Information Sources*. Detroit: Gale, 1981. pp. xxii, 631. \$44.00.

Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979: A Guide to Information Sources, edited by Amritjit Singh, Rajiva Verma, and Irene M. Joshi fulfils a long-felt need for a comprehensive and reliable source of bibliographical information in the area of Indian literature in English. The bibliography covers literature written in English by Indian writers and also works translated into English by the authors themselves. In recent years there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in Indian literature in English both within and outside the academy. However, there has so far been no exhaustive scholarly bibliography available in the field. *Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979: A Guide to Information Sources*, is the first attempt at a comprehensive listing, with occasional annotations of primary and secondary sources in Indo-Anglian literature from the very beginnings to 1979. The outcome is impressive and outstandingly successful as this excellent reference work lists over 5,000 sources in books and journals of creative writing in English by Indian authors.

This volume has been divided into two sections. Before I attempt to discuss the two parts, it will be worth mentioning that the Preface and "How to Use This Volume" give some very helpful information and chart guidelines for its use. The Preface explains the difference between such confusing terms as "Indo-Anglian Literature," "Indo-English Literature," "Indian Writing in English," and "Anglo-Indian Literature." In "How to Use This Volume" the editors have taken care to explain how to use the alphabetical listing and how they have dealt with some Indian names, such as multiple or hyphenated surnames, or names for which different spellings are often used. Part I of this Bibliography deals with general items on this Literature. This section has been subdivided into three parts: (i) Backgrounds, (ii) Reference Works, and (iii) Anthologies. The section "Backgrounds" seems to be particularly useful because for understanding any national literature, one needs a background of the cultural heritage of that country. This section contains lists of

books on various aspects of Indian life, including Indian painting, music, dance, cinema, religion, architecture, folk culture, myths, etc. This section also gives some background in Indian history, society and politics. The section on "Anthologies" is divided according to genres which is very convenient.

The second part of the bibliography which is really the soul of this work contains primary works of Indo-English literature arranged in four sections by genre: "Poetry," "Drama," "Fiction," and "Selected Prose." While listing an author's works, secondary sources have also been listed. Short comments on novels and plays have been included, and occasional annotation on collections of poems is also available. This permits the reader to form some idea of the content when the primary work might not be easily available. The section dealing with "Selected Prose" lists biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs which are listed alphabetically according to the writers. I feel that if this section had also been listed according to genre, as biographies in one list, and autobiographies in another and so on, it would have been more convenient for the user. Also, in this section on "Selected Prose," titles such as *Economic History of India* seem irrelevant because they represent purely expository as opposed to creative writing. Moreover, titles dealing with religion and philosophy could perhaps have been more appropriately included in the "Background" section than in the "Selected Prose" section. There is thus an avoidable overlap between "Backgrounds" and "Selected Prose."

The book has useful appendices containing lists of literary journals and Indian publishers. The indexes include primary author's index; author index which includes primary and secondary references to all authors, editors, compilers, and critics; and a title index.

To sum up, *Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979* is a definitive and monumental work which will be found indispensable by scholars interested in the field.

Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur PRIYA LAKSHMI GUPTA

Keki N. Daruwalla, edited with an Introduction. *Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-1980*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1980. pp. xl, 176. Rs. 60.00.

In his introduction to *Strangertime*, an anthology of Indian poetry in English, Pritish Nandy remarks: "There is a greater awareness that Indian writing in English must relate to the Indian literary scene. Our roots lie here; this is our literature. So it must reflect our concerns, discover our root metaphors, rather than seek salvation under another sky, attempting to identify with the ambience of

another culture." The poems in *Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-1980* truly represent and reflect "our concerns" and relate "to the Indian literary scene." In his "Introduction," Keki Daruwalla traces the origin, growth and development of Indian poetry in English, and highlights the problems that are faced by major contemporary poets. He points out that in the mid-50's a new generation of poets began to write about Indian reality. He considers Nissim Ezekiel as one of the "new" poets to write about everyday life with candour and understanding but without any romantic "strain." Ezekiel brought not only form and precision to the language but also changed the "climate" of poetry. Daruwalla explains:

What Indian poetry needed was someone whose writing approximated to the demands of the present-day world, who could bring into play a modern sensibility in confronting the confusion, bewilderment and disillusion of the times, someone who could transfer poetry from its bucolic habitat to an urban one, dump archaisms and the monotonous, jangling rhyme schemes of the earlier poets and adopt a form which could adequately display the subtle modulations of pace and the strength and sinews of free verse. Nissim Ezekiel was the first Indian poet to express a modern Indian sensibility in a modern idiom. ("Introduction," p. xvii)

Nissim Ezekiel, through his distinctive voice, influenced a generation of younger poets. The poets began to write poetry which had a direct bearing on the contemporary situation. They readily made use of the English language and the tools of craftsmanship to express their anguish, their disillusionment and their hope. Daruwalla further comments on the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel:

His three books in the fifties showed the way for the efflorescence of poetry which was to follow in the next two decades. In terms of the language used, the context of the poems and the sensibility from which they were derived, a clean break had been made with the past. ("Introduction," p. xix)

Daruwalla adds that the Writers Workshop, Calcutta, also helped in creating a proper "climate" of poetry in the country. He points out that good volumes of poetry were published by Kamala Das, A. K. Ramanujan, Adil Jussawalla and others. Poets were trying to establish new perspective, a new tradition. Some literary magazines like *Quest*, *Opinion*, *Literary Quarterly* and *Poetry India* also added a momentum for establishing poets who eschewed "dead" expressions and wornout clichés. After naming some significant journals and anthologies such as *Mahfil*, *East and West*, *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*, edited by Saleem Peeradina (Macmillan), *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*, edited by R. Parthasarathy (Oxford University Press), Daruwalla proceeds to analyze significant poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Deba Patnaik,

Kamala Das and others. He pays special attention to the theme of "exile." He takes up a group of poets like G. S. Sharat Chandra, Deba Patnaik, A. K. Ramanujan, Dilip Chitre and Shiv K. Kumar, and tries to show the expatriate experience in their poems. The reader understands the whole topography of the intra-culture clash and the conflicts that may affect the sensibility of a poet. Daruwalla also examines the intrinsic merits of three women poets, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande and Eunice De Souza, and in all these assessments, Daruwalla, a fine poet himself, proves to be a competent critic too. He then proceeds to analyze landscape as an integral part of the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, K. D. Katrak, Arun Kolatkar and Adil Jussawalla. I feel that landscape also figures prominently in poets like Keki Daruwalla, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, Dilip Chitre, and G. S. Sharat Chandra. The best example is Keki Daruwalla himself. Voyage as a central metaphor in "Crossing of Rivers," to take one example, proves that landscape, be it the land or the sea, becomes functional and intricately related to "human reality."

In the last section of his "Introduction," Daruwalla compares Indian poets to South American and Central American poets. He says that essentially the Indian poet is not exposed to "ravages of drugs, divorce, alcoholism, and the complete breakdown of values, which has afflicted Western society."

The poets represented in *Two Decades of Indian Poetry* include G. S. Sharat Chandra, Dilip Chitre, Keki N. Daruwalla, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Eunice De Souza, Nissim Ezekiel, Adil Jussawalla, K. D. Katrak, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arvind Krishan Mehrotra, Gieve Patel, Deba Patnaik, Saleem Peeradina and A. K. Ramanujan. The selections from these poets are preceded by brief but fine critical analyses of their work by Daruwalla. It is self-evident that Indian poetry in English has come a long way from its embryonic stage. Indian poetry needs no introduction for that matter. But as Daruwalla feels, Indian poets and their poetry should be properly understood in the Indian context. *Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-1980* should prove a rewarding experience for the readers of English poetry. With his fine critical acumen and creative judgment, Daruwalla has done a fine job of editing. The Indian poet has come "home."

Mysore

S. N. VIKRAM RAJ URS

Yasmine Gooneratne, *Silence, Exile and Cunning: The Fiction of Ruth Praver Jhabvala*. London: Sangam Books, 1983. pp. 325. £9.50.

This is a fine study: it is not only sensitive literary criticism, but an excellent literary accounting as well — exactly what such a book should be. Indeed, it is superior to any of the previous comprehensive studies on Jhabvala, and is likely to remain the classic reference and analysis for the foreseeable future. It is, further, a pleasure to read for its own sake, in addition to its fascinating subject, its style and its organization.

In terms of insight, the author has demonstrated that the oft-repeated (and often chauvinistic) charges that Jhabvala lacks empathy, fails to understand Indian culture, and deals only with the superficial in Indian life, are themselves superficial. As she establishes early on, and reaffirms again and again in the study, Jhabvala's works are not cynical attacks upon India, but artistic studies and presentations of life, of people — whether Indian or Western — who happen to be in India. Indeed, this could be the highest compliment which a writer might pay to a culture: that it would be of depth, complexity, and interest sufficient to warrant detached yet sensitive expression on the human condition.

There simply have been too many analysts who have mistaken Jhabvala's manner or style for callousness. Gooneratne effectively demonstrates the tragi-comic result of Jhabvala's detached compassion (she sympathizes with her characters, but she does not pity), reserved concern for shifting moral values, and restrained apprehension in regard to the new, post-imperial socio-economic conflict. The point is that there are moral positives (to use Gooneratne's term) to her characters, and that their moral worth and strength are to be found in how they react to the particular situations (even more so than to the general situation) in which they find themselves.

The author also clearly delineates the artistry and power of Jhabvala's techniques of style: the impact of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century English literature (especially the comedy of manners and Jane Austen), the mode of satire and irony (which has been shallowly understood — or more properly perhaps, intentionally misunderstood — by many Indian critics), the emphasis placed upon language and wording ("linguistic resources"), the meticulous care given to punctuation, and the effect that Jhabvala's writing for the cinema has had upon her fiction (largely in the use of cutaways).

In terms of style, Gooneratne reveals an admirable sense of context, the works being approached literarily but not in a social vacuum: Jhabvala is writing about people in special social situations,

and Gooneratne is aware of it; but the works are primarily literary studies, and Gooneratne is carefully aware of that. The treatments of the literary works can stand alone, but are also meaningfully interrelated and juxtaposed.

Similarly, the organization of the study is straightforward and unpretentious. After an introductory chapter, which is truly an introductory overlay, vertical as well as horizontal in approach, the eight novels are each examined in separate chapters, with no attempt to cluster them artificially as to mode or style; the final two chapters focus upon short stories and film-scripts. There are cross-references (e.g., showing the impact of film upon fiction, of short story upon novel, of fiction upon film) within each chapter which link the separate studies into a greater, comprehensive study.

The chapter on short stories weakens the work somewhat as a reference tool in that it does not deal with all the short stories, but with a number selected "for their technical interest" (p. 236). Nevertheless, elsewhere in the work, at the appropriate places, stories which have bearing upon or close affinity to particular novels are integrated into the study (and the book is well-indexed). The post-India stories ("Parasite," "A Summer by the Sea") are not treated, and while included in the bibliography do not appear to be indexed. These stories may be important as indicators (not only for the shift of physical focus, from India, but also for an intensification of darkness in mood); but, they are not, as yet, included in a bound collection. Further, due to the sheer number of stories, inclusion of all would likely result in an insurmountable logistic problem. And, the work is primarily a literary study of Jhabvala's fiction as a whole — not an annotated cataloguing of separate items. Before reading the chapter, this reviewer listed what I thought to be the five most important stories ("The Widow," "The Aliens," "An Experience of India," "A Spiritual Call," "Desecration"); all were handled, sensitively and concisely.

As with any truly interpretive presentation, differences of opinion will arise between reader and author. I found puzzling the interpretation of the use of the words "stimulus" and "stimulating," in a description of a party early in *Get Ready for Battle*, as carrying sexual connotation; yet it must be stressed that Gooneratne recognizes and emphasizes — tastefully but forcefully — the power and focus of sexual drive and desire in Jhabvala's fiction. And, I do not see the narrator of *Heat and Dust* as possessing the qualities of "idealism" and "heroism." Yet, such is the purpose of good literary criticism, to provoke thought and response in the reader.

There are two broader issues which I feel compelled to address. For all the stress upon Jhabvala's powers of satire and irony, the book seems to be hesitant in regard to her mastery of the use of

sarcasm; this is particularly apparent in the analysis of *A Backward Place* and one of its central characters, Etta. Gooneratne seems to take Etta more seriously than, it might be argued, does Jhabvala. And it also might be that Gooneratne, even while reiterating Jhabvala's quality of detachment, sees more of an identity between Jhabvala and her characters than there is.

While the above remarks are meant as observation more than criticism, there are a couple or so minor flaws, largely of a technical nature. The order of the section of the bibliography dealing with primary works is confusing: it is not arranged alphabetically nor chronologically; indeed, it does not appear to be arranged. And there are the bugaboos or printer's devils which seem to plague works printed in India; e.g., chapter two has twelve footnotes in the text, but only eleven in the notes, and chapter five has seven in the text but only six in the notes. A number of pages are not separated at the top, so a pen-knife or letter-opener is indispensable.

It is with some reluctance that any criticism, even on trivial technicality, is made concerning this book, for there is no desire whatsoever, in this review, to detract in the slightest from the significance and quality of this penetrating, sensible study. It is a major work in its own right, and in my opinion the major work on a major contemporary writer.

Washington State University

FRITZ BLACKWELL

Books Received

- CHANDRA, G. S. SHARAT, *The Ghost of Meaning*. Lewiston: Confluence Press Inc., 1978. pp. 49. \$3.25.
- DARUWALLA, KEKI N., *Crossing of Rivers*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 58. \$3.65.
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- NAIK, M. K. and S. MOKASHI-PUNEKAR, eds., *Perspectives on Indian Drama in English*. Madras: Oxford University Press, 1977. pp. x, 214.
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- RAO, VIMALA, *Banaras, 1974 & Other Poems*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1976. pp. 33. Rs. 20.00.
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- SINGH, AMRITJIT, RAJIVA VERMA, and IRENE M. JOSHI, eds., *Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979: A Guide To Information Sources*. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1981. pp. xxii, 631. \$44.00.
- SINGH, KIRPAL, ed., *Foreign Responses to Indian Writing in English*. Annamalaiagar: 1980. A Special Number of the *Journal of Indian Writing in English*, Volume 8, Nos. 1 & 2, January-July 1980. pp. 193. Rs. 16.00.
- WILLIAMS, H. M., *Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970: A Survey*. Madras: Orient Longman Limited, 1977. pp. viii, 137. Rs. 15.00.