

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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December 6, 2017. 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 (town/cantonment)
 - ▶ “colonial mimicry” (Homi Bhabha)
 - ▶ uneven development (modernization, but spotty)
 - ▶ multilingualism, stratified

review: Anglophone audiences

“Bhangi! (Sweeper) Bhangi!” (69)

He remembered so well the Tommies’ familiar abuse of the natives: ‘*Kala admi zamin par hagne wala*’ (black man, you who relieve yourself on the ground). (12)

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‘You are becoming a gentreman, ohe Bakhya! Where did you get that uniform?’ (10)

“You slavishly copy the English in everything...” (136; qtd. by “JC”)

He’s struggling to find a way to survive his bleak day-to-day life. (A.C.M.)

- ▶ Anand arrives in London 1925 to do a Ph.D. at UCL
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- ▶ E.M. Forster helps *U* to publication by left-wing house Wishart in 1935 after 19 rejections (too much feces in it)

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It is to the directness of his attack that Mr. Anand's success is probably due. (Forster, afterword, 141)

Indians, like most Orientals, are refreshingly frank; they have none of our complexes about functioning. (142)

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. (143)

technique and affiliation

His first sensation of the bazaar was of its smell, a pleasant aroma oozing from so many unpleasant things, drains, grains fresh and decaying vegetables, spices, men and women and asafoetida. Then it was the kaleidoscope of colours, the red, the orange, the purple of the fruit in the tiers of baskets which were arranged around the Peshawari fruit-seller, dressed in a blue silk turban, a scarlet velvet waistcoat, embroidered with gold, a long white tunic and trousers.... (34; qtd. by J.A.)

language and affiliation

Gandhi: Why don't you write in your language?

K. C. Azad: I have no language. My mother tongue is Punjabi. But the Sarkar [government] has appointed English and Urdu as court languages!...Few of us write in Punjabi. The only novel writer is Nanak Singh. There are no publishers in Punjabi or Urdu....In English—my novel may get published in London...

Gandhi: Acha! Write in any language that comes to hand. But say what Harijans say!

Anand, *Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, Arnold, 1991), 23; qtd. in Snehal Shingavi, *The Mahatma Misunderstood: The Politics and Forms of Literary Nationalism in India* (London: Anthem, 2014), 35.

“say what Harijans say”

He felt that the poet [Iqbal] would have been answering the most intimate questions in his (Bakha's) soul, if he had not used such big words. (137)

For, although he didn't know it, to him work was a sort of intoxication which gave him a glowing health and plenty of easy sleep. (11)

How a round base can be adjusted on a round top, how a sphere can rest on a sphere is a problem which may be of interest to those who think like Euclid or Archimedes. It never occurred to Sohini to ask herself anything like this. (15; qtd. by “JB”)

caste: the basics

- ▶ endogamy, hereditary occupations, ritual hierarchy
- ▶ varṇa (“class”/estate): Brāhman, 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 Act, 1950 Constitution)
 - ▶ Dalit (contemporary)

The contempt of those who came to the latrines daily and complained that there weren't any latrines clean, the sneers of the people in the outcastes' colony, the abuse of the crowd which had gathered round him this morning. It was all explicable now. A shock of which this was the name had passed through his perceptions, previously numb and torpid... "I am an Untouchable," he said to himself, an "Untouchable!" (42)

"But, you eater of your masters! why did you sit down on my doorstep, if you had to sit down at all! You have defiled my religion! You should have sat there in the gully!"... She saw the sadhu waiting. (60)

That the Mahatma should want to be born as an outcaste! That he should love scavenging! (130)

another affiliation

In the world of that time, it was not possible for the voice of the rejected to be heard.

Anand, South Asian Literary Recordings Project, Library of Congress, New Delhi Office, 2000[?].

www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/mulkrajanand.html.

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)

(Based on Michael Denning, “The Novelists’ International,” in *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti [Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002], 1:709–710.)

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* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935), 14. [UMDL Texts](#).

novel problems

Several challenges presented themselves: 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; and the attempt to create a vision of revolutionary social change in a form almost inherently committed to the solidity of society and history.

Denning, "The Novelists' International," 1:710.

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?’ (18–19)

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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.’ (37)

‘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!’ (38)

the politics of untouchability

[Gandhi:] “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.” (Anand, 128)

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, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables* (Bombay: Thacker, 1943), chap. 4. ambedkar.org.

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, *Mr. Gandhi*, chap. 10. ambedkar.org.

discussion: Gandhi's speech

1. Consider the sentences in the segment beginning “Bakha felt thrilled...” (130) one at a time, and explain what each 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

- ▶ papers due Friday 5 p.m. on Sakai
- ▶ bring Anand back in
- ▶ no commonplacing required
- ▶ start reading Narayan selections (Sakai)
 - ▶ focus on the first three stories