

Pegasus

Vol 2 No 1

January 2004

Bulletin of the Department of English, Heramba Chandra College

Contents

J. M. Coetzee: *An Imagination Pervaded by Apartheid*

The Nobel prize

The Nobel Prize in Literature: *The Recipients*
(From the Internet)

A Tryst with the Short Story: *A Report*

Contributors

Arpa Ghosh, Lecturer in English, Vivekananda College for Girls.

Ms. Swaty Mitra, Research Scholar, Calcutta University.

Prof. Antara Chatterjee, Lecturer in English, S.A. Jaypuria College (Morning).

Teachers and students from other institutions are invited to send us articles properly typed and not longer than 1500 words. Articles not selected will be returned if accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelopes. Send us notices and news of literary activity. Articles can be sent by e-mail to:
biswas4@cal3.vsnl.net.in

Visit us at
www.herambachandrasouthcity.com

Foreword

Dark clouds on the horizons of free thought have been looming for a long time. Now they not only threaten a storm, they have actually started to rumble. The unthinkable has happened in West Bengal. A book has been banned at the behest of the government. It is heard that recommendations of some self-appointed and government approved guardians of morality and social stability prompted the authorities to take this step. This Winter, we can consider ourselves fortunate. There are no less than twenty-five *Magi* showing us the way where even the Christ had merely four at his nativity.

Taslima Nasrin's *Dwikhandita* may or may not be a classic, a reader may or may not be enamoured of her ideas, but the very thought of muzzling her is totally abhorrent and smacks of attempts at thought-control befitting of an Orwellian universe. Incidentally, George Orwell's *1984* was challenged, in certain states of the USA, as a 'pro-Communist' book. How dense can you get!

Pegasus believes with Voltaire: *I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it.* We believe in polemics too. Debate – about intellectual differences, lifestyle choices, differences in taste and modes of expression – can only lead to enrichment of thought and imagination and a fuller understanding of life around us.

Personally, this writer shares most of Taslima Nasrin's concerns and beliefs, and thinks that she is a very important author whose autobiography will go down in history as a remarkable human document.

Too often we find ourselves wondering, whenever the Nobel Prize in Literature is announced – who is this person so honoured? Is he as good as they claim?

We have thus decided to acquaint our readers with J. M. Coetzee, the South African novelist who was awarded the Prize for the year 2003. Prof. Arpa Ghosh can claim more familiarity with this novelist than many of her peers and *Pegasus* asked her to do a short article on him. We thank her for complying with our request. We must also thank Ms. Swaty Mitra for her brief overview of the Prize and its history.

Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

– The American Library Association *Library Bill of Rights*

J. M. Coetzee: *An Imagination Pervaded by Apartheid*

Arpa Ghosh

John Maxwell Coetzee, Afrikaner by birth and English by orientation, was born in 1940 in Cape Town, South Africa. In his youth, Coetzee lived with his parents and grew up primarily in the vast Karoo (from the Hottentot word for 'dry'), the one hundred thousand square-mile tableland of desert and semidesert that covers two-thirds of the Cape province. This experience set the scene for the powerful descriptive passages in his novels.

Coetzee began his career as a novelist with his 1974 publication *Dusklands*, a self-reflexive novel divided in two parts. Rather an unusual first novel, the first part of the book is a narration by an American official Eugene Dawn of a report prepared on the Vietnam war. The second part is the first person narration of a seventeenth century prospector Jacobus Coetzee's journey into the interior of the Cape. Obviously, in this first novel, the young novelist seeks to draw a parallel between the American government's attempts to influence, through the medium of official reports and papers, public opinion regarding its largely unsuccessful war against the Vietnamese, and the 17th century Dutch prospector's attempts of self-fictionalize his encounter with the indigenous African Cape tribes.

Dusklands reveals two important attributes in Coetzee's work: first, Coetzee's proclivity towards experimentation with narrative forms, an essentially postmodern quality and, second, his efforts to expose the distorting, hegemonic role played by history in documenting key events and at times, fashioning events out of non-events. This conflict is a recurrent motif in his literary career.

The existentialist artist Kafka has been a source of inspiration to white South African writers like Coetzee. The tussle between individual and authority/father-figure, non-violent resistance against torture and oppression, and a blank incomprehension of unbelievable atrocities are the Kafkaesque features pervading Coetzee's work.

Among Coetzee's novels, *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* have achieved the popularity of bestsellers. *Waiting for the Barbarians* is regarded as his best known and most widely read novel, while *Life and Times...* has won him his first Booker, and *Disgrace*, a second.

Coetzee's work has never been free from controversy. He has enjoyed immense popularity in the West while facing harsh criticism at home for distancing himself from the historical and political exigencies of the South African situation. His response to apartheid, detractors feel, is too indirect and circuitous to be regarded as representative. Coetzee is more interested in discussing the abstract and theoretical aspects of colonialism, in unearthing, exposing and dismantling the exploitative power structures of racially divided societies. At the same

time he avoids going into the specifics of apartheid; an unnatural civic order imposed by an Afrikaner government on the black majority of South Africa between 1948 and 1991 for specific economic reasons. Michael K, the protagonist of Coetzee's *Life and Times...* in this context, could be any dispossessed victim marginalized by a faceless oppressive force. Excluded from land usurped by the powerful minority, Michael is more preoccupied in salvaging for himself an independent, self-reliant existence tied to the soil than in participating in any mass protest movement to recover his erased social rights. In significant ways Michael recalls Voltaire's *Candide* whose concluding statement in the celebrated novel is, 'but we must go and work in the garden'. The time and locale of the novel is unspecified. So too is the nature of oppression. Michael's silent resistance is instinctive rather than informed. Time and again it is evident in Coetzee's novels that the system of oppression is too enormous and complex to be grasped by its victims, each of whom is weak, dispossessed, lonely and cut off from his community of fellow sufferers.

The alienating effect of oppression receives minute attention from this gifted novelist. Some of his characters like Michael K and Friday (*Foe*) are essentially outcasts, individuals ousted from community, family and flung into a cold, alien, ruthless environment of colonialism, while others like Magda (the frigid Afrikaner woman who commits patricide in *In the Heart of the Country*), the Magistrate who develops a strange attraction for a barbarian woman and is consequently deposed and tortured by the very Empire he serves for a lifetime (*Waiting for the Barbarians*), Elizabeth Curren (a cancer patient who is brought up close against the mindless violence of the children's movement against the minority government in *Age of Iron*) and Lucy (a lesbian woman raped and impregnated by tsotsis in *Disgrace*) make abortive attempts to free themselves from the Cartesian dichotomies of colonialism. The future is bleak and bereft, the barrier between blacks and whites insurmountable.

The desert landscape, frequent in Coetzee's novels, acquires a piquant significance in this context. Aridity, brine water, snow drifts, stick and stones and women either barren or burdened by an undesired sexuality are the components of the landscape of his novels.

Coetzee's focus is the white subject who, at the turning point of history, finds himself in a blind alley. Repeatedly, the ahistorical position of the white minority, a position they have fashioned for themselves by wilfully and unjustly excluding the black majority from all social and educational benefits, is emphasized in his novels. Coetzee, suspicious of the realist, polemical mode of novel-writing, preferred by most South African

novelists of and before his time, chooses to subvert the realist mode in his best work. Thus *Waiting...* is a combination of stark naturalism and allegory, and *Life and Times...* combines the pastoral idyll, agrarian protest novel and the naturalist mode.

Even when Coetzee adopts the realist mode as in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* he is chary of specifically locating his plot in a known historical time and setting. His argument is that history is not reality, but only one of the several competing methods of interpreting reality. Like the story, history too, Coetzee feels, is a discourse, and is in effect a more dangerous and hectoring discourse than the former. As a novelist, Coetzee chooses to exercise his prerogative in giving ascendancy to the story over history.

Coetzee as the humane individual, the Afrikaner ridden with guilt for the injustice against the black majority perpetrated by his tribe, speaks through his essays and interviews unequivocally denouncing injustice. But as the teller of tales, Coetzee is the illusionist, the fabulist, who refuses to be tied down by history. Coetzee's novels are imbued with the malodorous aftertaste of colonialism. His intense pessimism and morbid imagination arise from his white South African's knowledge of the coercive machinations of the apartheid Nationalist government. His return to South Africa in 1971 after research and teaching in the USA marked his decision to stay in the country of his birth. Fellow professor Stephen Watson of University of Cape Town describes him as the 'colonizer who refuses'. Watson sees him as an artist caught in the dilemma of the contemplative or creative world of being and in the active-participant world of becoming. In Watson's words:

This type of person is half in the world of being, only half in the world of becoming. They cannot fail to feel the wrench of history pulling them in one direction and simultaneously, the opposing pull of a world of contemplation where time is cyclical and knows no interruptions... They often cannot decide in favour of one or other mode of being. If they choose contemplation, history will not cease to remind them of their irresponsibility and guilt. If they decide to act, to enter history, the world of being that they have necessarily left behind will continue to be present to them in the form of an inner hollowness.¹

Prominent South African critics including Nadine Gordimer have detected an inner hollowness, a 'malaise' in Coetzee's novels. Coetzee sees history as a discursive meaning imposed on events. It is also evident that his novels are burdened with conflict between historicity and allegorical paradigms. His critics rightly observe that his novels offer no pragmatic solutions to current affairs, his characters are frozen in postures of dominance and submission and his novelistic vision is centred on a core of emptiness.

However, it is also a fact that Coetzee has faced

criticism on an issue affecting all white South African novelists. Except for Joe Slovo and Ruth First who immersed themselves completely in the political activism of apartheid Africa, all white South African authors including Gordimer and Brink have failed in the final acid test of complete identification with black sensibility. A certain failure of white imagination is evident in the final count whenever relationships between black and white are portrayed.

It will however be a gross mistake to overlook the historical subtext in Coetzee's novels. For instance, Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* published in 1978, two years after the Soweto Revolt, makes no overt reference to the school children's violent rebellion against the inclusion of Afrikaner in the syllabus of black schools, which claimed 170 lives within a week. Coetzee's novel, a highly convoluted and intricate work, adapts the stream of consciousness mode to examine the diseased psychology of a white Afrikaner spinster, Magda, who, unable to accept her father's second marriage murders him. Covertly however, the major issue of the Soweto Revolt, the issue of language as a medium of exchange between the master and slave, is the center of interest in this novel.

Coetzee, though much criticized by the enlightened white community for not focusing on the immediate political issue of the Soweto Revolt in his *In The Heart of the Country* handles the question of protest from the epistemological rather than political angle. This is just an instance of the way Coetzee's imagination has reacted to the reality of apartheid.

Coetzee himself has observed that the major black writer, who will unite the fragmented, disunited experiences of apartheid Africa in a single Great South African Novel, is yet to arrive. The chief reason is that South Africa, rent apart along lines of race and colour, does not constitute a national or ethnic unity. The native South African languages including Afrikaner have no currency outside South Africa, whereas English, the dominant language in world literature and Coetzee's chosen medium has failed to establish a 'South African linguistic consciousness'² even after two hundred years. Coetzee's own novels succeed in transforming their stories into the universality of allegory. In Stephen Watson's words:

In Coetzee's transfiguring myths, in his penchant for situations way beyond the bounds of society, in the very asceticism of his style which gave no place to any 'naturalistic arbitrariness', there seem to lurk a quasi-religious impulse which, whether recognized by the reader or not, only made his work much more compelling.

It matters little that Coetzee, by his own admission, has not written the Great South African novel. What ultimately matters is that he has been true to his artistic vision. He has told the truth about his society and all societies torn and damaged by divisive powers of colonialism. I conclude by quoting Coetzee's observation on his own experience as a

novelist living in South Africa:

For the writer the deeper problem is not to allow himself to be impaled on the dilemma proposed by the state, namely, either to ignore its obscenities or else to produce representations of them. The true challenge is how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority.³

1. Watson, Stephen. 'Colonialism in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee.' *Research in African Literatures* 17 (1986) 385

2. Coetzee, J. M. *The Great South African Novel* Leadership SA 2, 79

3. Coetzee, J. M. *Into the Dark Chamber: The Novelist and South Africa*. New York Book Review, 22 January 1986, 13

The Nobel Prize

Swaty Mitra

The century old Nobel Prize is founded on an ethical peculiarity. The prosperous dynamite merchant Alfred Nobel, in his desire to fulfil his altruistic dreams, invested the wealth he had amassed from manufacturing dynamite in a special fund. It is believed that Nobel read a French newspaper report in 1867 where he was mistakenly reported to be dead in a factory accident. The newspaper report described him as a *merchant of death*, which caused Nobel great distress. In 1893, he made a will which stipulated that the capital from all his realisable estate should be invested in a

fund whose annual interests would be given as prize money to individuals who, in the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind, specifically in the fields of chemistry, physics, medicine, peace and literature.

The first Nobels were given out in 1901. By 1930 the Nobel Prize was being hailed as the 'gold standard' by *The New York Times*. However, the Nobel has never been free from suspicions of racial discrimination and political chauvinism, although Alfred Nobel himself wished

that in awarding the prizes no consideration whatever shall be given to the nationality of the candidates, but that the most worthy shall receive the prize, whether he be a Scandinavian or not.

The Nobel Prize for literature has been particularly vulnerable to charges of oversight, discriminations and bigotry. It has been alleged that the Nobel Committee has often overlooked epoch-making authors for little known and less impressive writers. The prerequisite assigned by Alfred Nobel for this particular award – 'the most outstanding work of an idealistic tendency' – which continue to be variously interpreted by the Committee members, has prevented the awarding body, the Swedish Academy, from assigning a definite parameter against which a literary work may be judged. As literary or aesthetic merit remains disregarded as a criteria for judgement the Nobel Prize for Literature continue to bear allegations of arbitrariness.

To understand the cause of the anomalies it might prove helpful at this point to swiftly recapitulate the functioning of the Swedish Academy. The initial

stage of the selecting process is considerably democratic. The Nobel Committee, comprising of half-a-dozen members of the Swedish Academy, sends out invitations to previous Nobel laureates, several hundred professors of literature and languages, presidents of authors' organisations, members of sister academies and other representative literary people during the autumn of the previous year, seeking nominations for the following year's Nobel laureate. From the forwarded recommendations they short-list *twenty* candidates and submit their names to the full Swedish Academy for the final selection. The number is further reduced to *five* following further deliberations of the Academy members. The final winner is elected by secret ballot. The name is made known to the press in the Grand Hall of the Academy, housed in the palatial buildings of the former Stockholm Stock Exchange. All other details, including the remaining names on the shortlist, are kept confidential. However, although the set-up is apparently democratic it has sufficient room for machinations.

It is necessary to keep in mind that since the members enjoy a lifetime membership of the Academy, a particular taste for literature dominates for an extensive period of time, the determining prerequisite continuing to be 'an idealistic tendency'. Indeed the first several years of the award saw a predominance of Nobel's taste for literature, which according to James Campbell is profoundly *middlebrow*.

Over the years the choice of the awardees has come to be regarded as an expression of a particular hegemonic preference. The Nobel has become a token of recognition meted out to authors who, if white by origin, uphold the ideals of western civilisation, and if non-white, show sufficient supplication to those ideals. That in its hundred and two years it has found only *nine* women writers meritorious enough for the honour is ample proof of the Academy's sexist attitude. That *two* of the *nine* women Nobel Laureates are Scandinavians and the rest are non-whites, smacks of the existence of other covert political agenda. As a result, the award itself has become a suspect. Which is a pity as deserving authors too are regarded with mistrust.

A case in point may be Toni Morrison. Her works

reflect a perfect balance between deep analysis of inter-personal and inter-racial relationships and stylistic acumen making her one of the most deserving claimants in her generation for the award. Yet, the Nobel was awarded to her only in 1993, and one is immediately tempted to associate the decision with an insidious US policy to appease its Afro-American citizens and, more importantly, present to the world an image of itself as a nation free from racial bigotry after the Rodney King affair and the 1992 Los Angeles riots. The South African writer John Maxwell Coetzee's winning the honour in 2003 is also being sceptically regarded as a continuation of The Swedish Academy's flirtation with Zionism; it follows too close on the heels of the distinction granted to the Jewish-Hungarian Imre Kertész in 2002. What needs to be noted here that there is no intention through these references to express doubts about the artistic credentials of the aforementioned laureates, but only to suggest that the award itself has failed to raise itself above discriminations of race, religion and political jingoism.

The scepticism involving the Nobel has also been fuelled by the Committee's erratic elision of some of the stalwarts of world literature from consideration for the award. The first Nobel for Literature in 1901 was given to the little known and almost forgettable French *Parnassian* poet Sully Prudhomme, at a time when Leo Tolstoy was still writing. Later Thomas Hardy, modernists like Henry James and James Joyce were overlooked, while the award was given to John Galsworthy. Graham Greene was rejected, in spite of being nominated several times. Ibsen and Strindberg were also by-passed. In an well-analysed article James Campbell makes merry of such howlers. However, very significantly, he forgets to mention the omission of Virginia Woolf, who too had been kept out of Nobel's hall of fame, in his article entitled 'Alfred Nobel and His Prizes: Does literature really need a "gold standard"'? Surely the slighting of her contribution to literature is as much a cause of concern as that of her male contemporaries? Nor does Campbell seem surprised by the fact that none of the important women authors, who are either English or WASP American, by origin and nationality, have ever been recognised for the award. Campbell also forgets to mention that the legendary African writer Chinua Achebe has been so far ignored by the Nobel Committee. This gives rise to the question whether both the Nobel Academy and some of its critics share the same biases.

Why was Chinua Achebe given a miss? Surely the author who expressed the pure cadences of a race and sculpted the English language to make the expressions befitting of that race's philosophy has a rightful claim to the award? In an article 'The Nobel "Lord" And Afro-Literary Activists: The Case Of Chinua Achebe', Ugochukwu D. Ejinkeonye considers this disregard as an act of vengeance on Achebe by 'the guardians of the Western literary cannon in Oxford and Stockholm and Harvard' for expelling 'the myth of a dark Africa, peopled by

savages without history and so without a story, a myth assiduously cultivated and peddled by European...explorers and mercenary soldiers of the Frederick Lugard variety', in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). According to Ejinkeonye, Achebe

...is widely seen as an 'uppity nigger' who does not know his place, who does not accord white 'Massa' sufficient respect ... Above all, Achebe is considered the cultural equivalent of Kwameh Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, and Patrice Lumumba, great Africans who made it clear from the outset that their life's mission was to rid the continent of the armed robbers and rapists that had held her down for five centuries.

Interestingly, the Academy which has earned severe disrepute for its acts of omission considered the reactionary, anti-establishment author Jean Paul Sartre deserving of the award. It is hard to believe that the Academy found Sartre's philosophy analogous with the notion of the 'idealistic tendency' urged by Alfred Nobel. In Sartre's case, one suspect the working of the politics of inclusion by which anti-establishment, resistant forces (authors) are appropriated within the dominant mainstream discourse and subsequently defeated. Sartre's refusal of the award of course foiled the academy's unholy intentions at least in one case.

The scepticism concerning the Nobel is strengthened by such events. It is known that Bernard Shaw, who nurtured a personal mistrust for all awards because of the money that they involve, when awarded the Nobel promptly opened a fund with the prize money, when he realised he could not refuse the honour. Tolstoy who, according to the majority Western intelligentsia, deserved the first Nobel for literature in 1901 is believed to have personally ensured that he didn't receive the award through a letter he wrote to his Finnish friend, the writer Arvid Ernefeld, who had connections in Sweden. In this letter he requested his friend to prevent the Nobel being given to him. With his remarkable foresight Tolstoy must have recognised the murky facets of the award and wisely kept himself away from it.

A hundred years later as we still sit in awe of the Nobel, perhaps we can take heart from these proud acts of refusal and begin to regard the Nobel Prize for what it is in truth – a belated act of altruism from the wealth accumulated by a *merchant of death*. It is often used as a tool by the Western, Christian, Imperialists forces to continue its hegemonic dominance over what they arrogantly believe to be the international *matrix of culture* as a part of their continuous quest to recapture total dominance once again after losing political hold after decolonisation.

Like it or not, the Nobel Prize continues to stand as *the 'gold standard'*. And can any of us truly elude its chimeric thrall? We think not.

(The author expresses her indebtedness to inputs from the Internet.)

Nobel Prize in Literature: *The Recipients*

From the Internet

2003 – JOHN MAXWELL COETZEE who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider

2002 – IMRE KERTÉSZ for writing that upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history

2001 – V. S. NAIPAUL for perceptive narrative and incorruptible scrutiny that show us suppressed histories.

2000 – GAO XINGJIAN for an oeuvre of universal validity, bitter insights and linguistic ingenuity, which has opened new paths for the Chinese novel and drama.

1999 – GUNTER GRASS whose frolicsome black fables portray the forgotten face of history.

1998 – JOSE SARAMAGO who with parables sustained by imagination, compassion and irony continually enables us once again to apprehend an elusory reality.

1997 – DARIO FO who emulates the jesters of the Middle Ages in scourging authority and upholding the dignity of the downtrodden.

1996 – WISLAWA SZYMBORSKA for poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality.

1995 – SEAMUS HEANEY for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past.

1994 – KENZABURO OE in whose imagined world life and myth condense to reveal the human predicament.

1993 – TONI MORRISON who in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality.

1992 – DEREK WALCOTT for a poetic oeuvre of great luminosity, sustained by a historical vision, the outcome of a multicultural commitment.

1991 – NADINE GORDIMER who through her magnificent epic writing has been of very great benefit to humanity.

1990 – OCTAVIO PAZ for impassioned writing with wide horizons, characterized by sensuous intelligence and humanistic integrity.

1989 – CAMILO JOSÉ CELA for a rich and intensive prose, which with restrained compassion forms a challenging vision of man's vulnerability.

1988 – NAGUIB MAHFOUZ who, through works rich in nuance has formed an Arabian narrative art that applies to all mankind.

1987 – JOSEPH BRODSKY for an all-embracing authorship, imbued with clarity of thought and poetic intensity.

1986 – WOLE SOYINKA who in a wide cultural perspective and with poetic overtones fashions the drama of existence.

1985 – CLAUDE SIMON who in his novel combines the poet's and the painter's creativeness with a deepened awareness of time in the depiction of the human condition.

1984 – JAROSLAV SEIFERT for his poetry which endowed with freshness, sensuality and rich inventiveness provides a liberating image of the indomitable spirit and versatility of man.

1983 – SIR WILLIAM GOLDING for his novels which, with the perspicuity of realistic narrative art and the diversity and universality of myth, illuminate the human

condition in the world of today.

1982 – GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ for his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts.

1981 – ELIAS CANETTI for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power.

1980 – CZESLAW MILOSZ who with uncompromising clear-sightedness voices man's exposed condition in a world of severe conflicts.

1979 – ODYSSEUS ELYTIS (pen-name of ODYSSEUS ALEPOUDHELIS), for his poetry, which depicts with sensuous strength and intellectual clear-sightedness modern man's struggle for freedom and creativeness.

1978 – ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER for his impassioned narrative art which, with roots in a Polish-Jewish cultural tradition, brings universal human conditions to life.

1977 – VICENTE ALEIXANDRE for a creative poetic writing which illuminates man's condition in the cosmos and in present-day society.

1976 – SAUL BELLOW for the human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture that are combined in his work.

1975 – EUGENIO MONTALE for his distinctive poetry which has interpreted human values under the sign of an outlook on life with no illusions.

1974 – The prize was divided equally between EYVIND JOHNSON for a narrative art, farseeing in lands and ages, in the service of freedom & HARRY MARTINSON for writings that catch the dewdrop and reflect the cosmos.

1973 – PATRICK WHITE for an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature.

1972 – HEINRICH BÖLL for his writing which through its combination of a broad perspective on his time and a sensitive skill in characterization has contributed to a renewal of German literature.

1971 – PABLO NERUDA for a poetry that with the action of an elemental force brings alive a continent's destiny and dreams.

1970 – ALEKSANDR ISAEVICH SOLZHENITSYN for the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature.

1969 – SAMUEL BECKETT for his writing, which – in new forms for the novel and drama – in the destitution of modern man acquires its elevation.

1968 – YASUNARI KAWABATA for his narrative mastery and great sensibility.

1967 – MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS for his vivid literary achievement, deep-rooted in the national traits and traditions of Indian peoples of Latin America.

1966 – The prize was divided equally between SHMUEL YOSEF AGNON for his profoundly characteristic narrative art with motifs from the life of the Jewish people & NELLY SACHS for her outstanding lyrical and dramatic writing, which interprets Israel's destiny with touching strength.

1965 – MICHAIL ALEKSANDROVICH SHOLOKHOV for the artistic power and integrity.

1964 – JEAN-PAUL SARTRE for his work which, rich in ideas and filled with the spirit of freedom and the quest

for truth, has exerted a far-reaching influence on our age. (Declined the prize.)

1963 – GIORGOS SEFERIS (pen-name of GIORGOS SEFERIADIS), for his eminent lyrical writing, inspired by a deep feeling for the Hellenic world of culture.

1962 – JOHN STEINBECK for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception.

1961 – IVO ANDRIĆ for the epic force with which he has traced themes and depicted human destinies drawn from the history of his country.

1960 – SAINT-JOHN PERSE (pen-name of ALEXIS LÉGER), for the soaring flight and the evocative imagery of his poetry.

1959 – SALVATORE QUASIMODO for his lyrical poetry, which with classical fire expresses the tragic experience of life in our own times.

1958 – BORIS LEONIDOVICH PASTERNAK for his important achievement both in contemporary lyrical poetry and in the field of the great Russian epic tradition. (Accepted first, later caused by the authorities of his country to decline the prize.)

1957 – ALBERT CAMUS for his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times.

1956 – JUAN RAMÓN JIMÉNEZ for his lyrical poetry, which in Spanish language constitutes an example of high spirit and artistic purity.

1955 – HALLDÓR KILJAN LAXNESS for his vivid epic power which has renewed the great narrative art of Iceland.

1954 – ERNEST MILLER HEMINGWAY for his mastery of the art of narrative, most recently demonstrated in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style.

1953 – SIR WINSTON LEONARD SPENCER CHURCHILL for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory.

1952 – FRANÇOIS MAURIAC for the deep spiritual insight and the artistic intensity with which he has in his novels penetrated the drama of human life.

1951 – PÅR FABIAN LAGERKVIST for the artistic vigour and true independence of mind with which he endeavours in his poetry.

1950 – EARL BERTRAND ARTHUR WILLIAM RUSSELL in recognition of his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought.

1949 – WILLIAM FAULKNER for his powerful and artistically unique contribution to the modern American novel.

1948 – THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT for his outstanding, pioneer contribution to present-day poetry.

1947 – ANDRÉ PAUL GUILLAUME GIDE for his comprehensive and artistically significant writings, in which human problems and conditions have been presented with a fearless psychological insight.

1946 – HERMANN HESSE for his inspired writings which, while growing in boldness and penetration, exemplify the classical humanitarian ideals and high qualities of style.

1945 – GABRIELA MISTRAL (pen-name of LUCILA GODOY Y ALCA-YAGA), for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world.

1944 – JOHANNES VILHELM JENSEN for the rare strength and fertility of his poetic imagination.

1943-1940 – The prize money was allocated to the Main Fund (1/3) and to the Special Fund (2/3) of this prize section.

1939 – FRANS EEMIL SILLANPÄÄ for his deep understanding of his country's peasantry and the exquisite representation of their life.

1938 – PEARL BUCK (pen-name of PEARL WALSH née SYDENSTRICKER), for her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China.

1937 – ROGER MARTIN DU GARD for the artistic power and truth with which he has depicted human conflict as well as some fundamental aspects of contemporary life in his novelcycle *Les Thibault*.

1936 – EUGENE GLADSTONE O'NEILL for the power, honesty and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy.

1935 – The prize money was allocated to the Main Fund (1/3) and to the Special Fund (2/3) of this prize section.

1934 – LUIGI PIRANDELLO for his bold and ingenious revival of dramatic and scenic art.

1933 – IVAN ALEKSEYEVICH BUNIN for the strict artistry with which he has carried on the classical Russian traditions in prose writing.

1932 – JOHN GALSWORTHY for his distinguished art of narration which takes its highest form in *The Forsythe Saga*.

1931 – ERIK AXEL KARLFELDT for his poetry.

1930 – SINCLAIR LEWIS for his vigorous and graphic art of description and his ability to create, with wit and humour, new types of characters.

1929 – THOMAS MANN principally for his great novel, *Buddenbrooks*, which has won steadily increased recognition as one of the contemporary classics.

1928 – SIGRID UNSET principally for her powerful descriptions of Northern life during the Middle Ages.

1927 – HENRI BERGSON in recognition of his rich and vitalizing ideas and the brilliant skill with which they have been presented.

1926 – GRAZIA DELEDDA (pen-name of GRAZIA MADESANI née DELEDDA), for her idealistically inspired writings and their dealings with human problems in general.

1925 – GEORGE BERNARD SHAW for his work which is marked by both idealism and humanity, its stimulating satire often being infused with a singular poetic beauty.

1924 – WLADYSLAW STANISLAW REYMENT (pen-name of REYMENT), for his great national epic, *The Peasants*.

1923 – WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS for his always inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation.

1922 – JACINTO BENAVENTE for the happy manner in which he has continued the illustrious traditions of the Spanish drama.

1921 – ANATOLE FRANCE (pen-name of JACQUES ANATOLE THIBAUT), in recognition of his brilliant literary achievements, nobility of style, a profound human sympathy, grace, and a true Gallic temperament.

1920 – KNUT PEDERSEN HAMSUN for his monumental work, *Growth of the Soil*.

1919 – CARL FRIEDRICH GEORG SPITTELER in special appreciation of his epic, *Olympian Spring*.

1918 – The prize money for 1918 was allocated to the Special Fund of this prize section.

1917 – The prize was divided equally between KARL ADOLPH GJELLERUP for his varied and rich poetry, which is inspired by lofty ideals & HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN for his authentic descriptions of present-day life in Denmark.

1916 – CARL GUSTAF VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM in recognition of his significance as the leading representative of a new era in our literature.

1915 – ROMAIN ROLLAND as a tribute to the lofty idealism of his literary production and to his sympathy and love of truth.

1914 – The prize money for 1914 was allocated to the Special Fund of this prize section.

1913 – RABINDRANATH TAGORE because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse and poetic thought.

1912 – GERHART JOHANN ROBERT HAUPTMANN primarily in recognition of his fruitful, varied and outstanding production in the realm of dramatic art.

1911 – COUNT MAURICE (MOORIS) POLIDORE MARIE BERNHARD MAETERLINCK, in appreciation of his many-sided literary activities, and especially of his dramatic works.

1910 – PAUL JOHANN LUDWIG HEYSE as a tribute to the consummate artistry, permeated with idealism, which he has demonstrated as a lyric poet, dramatist, novelist and writer of world-renowned short stories.

1909 – SELMA OTTILIA LOVISA LAGERLÖF in appreciation of the lofty idealism, vivid imagination and spiritual perception that characterize her writings.

1908 – RUDOLF CHRISTOPH EUCKEN in recognition of his earnest search for truth, his penetrating power of thought, his wide range of vision, and the warmth and strength in presentation.

1907 – RUDYARD KIPLING in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration.

1906 – GIOSUÈ CARDUCCI for his deep learning and critical research, and as a tribute to the creative energy, freshness of style, and lyrical force.

1905 – HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ because of his outstanding merits as an epic writer.

1904 – The prize was divided equally between FRÉDÉRIC MISTRAL in recognition of the fresh originality and true inspiration of his poetic production and his significant work as a Provençal philologist & JOSÉ ECHEGARAY Y EIZAGUIRRE in recognition of his contribution towards the revival of the great traditions of the Spanish drama.

1903 – BJØRNSTJERNE MARTINUS BJØRNSON as a tribute to his noble, magnificent and versatile poetry.

1902 : CHRISTIAN MATTHIAS THEODOR MOMMSEN the greatest living master of the art of historical writing, with special reference to his monumental work, A history of Rome.

1901 – SULLY PRUDHOMME (pen-name of RENÉ FRANÇOIS ARMAND), in special recognition of his poetic composition, which gives evidence of lofty idealism, artistic perfection and a rare combination of the qualities of both heart and intellect.

A Tryst with the Short Story: A Report

Antara Chatterjee

The day-long seminar on the modern short story organized by the English Department of S.A. Jaipuria College (Morning) on November 28, 2003 proved to be an invigorating and enlightening affair. *A Tryst with the Short Story* explored the different facets of this literary form which has succeeded in capturing the imagination of generations of readers. The day's proceedings were set rolling by the welcome address of Principal Jayanta Acharya. The turnout was impressive and enthusiastic young faces formed a sizeable portion of the audience. In his keynote address, Professor Ujjwal Basu, Registrar of Calcutta University acquainted the audience with the wide variety of the short story as a genre. He examined the attributes and readership of the form and claimed that the modern readers, in particular, could not avoid an encounter with the short story.

Professor Sudeshna Chakraborty of Calcutta University gave a historical overview of the short story as a literary form. Her paper offered interesting insights by relating the short story with ancient forms of narrative and folk tales like Aesop's fables and the *Vikram* and *Betaal* stories.

Professor Salil Biswas, Head of the Department of English, Heramba Chandra College, Kolkata presented a stimulating paper in which he attempted to delineate the innovations in narrative technique adopted by modern short story writers. He gave a detailed analysis of the techniques and narrative devices used by Joseph Conrad in his short story 'The Lagoon'.

The highlight of the day was however the innovative story-reading session in the afternoon by students. Participants from the English Honours classes had written short stories at a *workshop*, which had been organized the day before. During the afternoon session students read out their stories and the best one was rewarded by the judges of the day, Professor Sanjukta Chakraborty of Calcutta University and Ms. Chitralakha Basu of *The Statesman*. Before the story reading by the students, both the judges read excerpts from some of their own wonderfully captivating short stories to give the audience an idea about the true nature of the *genre*. Among the four stories presented by the students, the one written by the Third year Honours students emerged the winner of the day. Their efforts were rewarded with a trophy and there were individual prizes for all participants in the group.

Kudos to the English Department for organizing a Seminar that turned out to be such an illuminating experience for teachers and students alike.