A Division of the Spoils, the longest of the four novels, is the concluding movement of The Quartet. As such, it arrests the various signifying processes of each individual novel and coheres them into symbols which not only bring the text a fitting closure but also yield the central signified of The Quartet. A Division covers the period between 1945-1947 in the political history of India, i.e. from the cessation of the World War II to the attainment of Indian independence. The internecine mayhem and the rushed partition of the Indian subcontinent which attend this independence give lie to the oft-quoted noble intentions of the British towards India. The polarization of the two major communities of India on the axis of religion leading to a bloody division of the country proves hollow the British claim of having imposed a unifying pattern on an otherwise unwieldy mass of land. It signals, in fact, a failure of the British on one vital count. This political framework of the novel has a hermeneutic pressure on its fictional foreground, a large part of which is filled in by a detailed recapitulation of the Bibighar affair of The Jewel signifying a frustrated union of the British and the Indians on the basic level of human relationship. A Division thus orchestrates a whole range of relationships-personal, sectarian, racial and cultural- as well as the British responses to their role and responsibility in a two centuries' old institution that is on the threshold of a permanent disappearance.

The Quartet has not been originally planned as a set of four interrelated novels. As Scott himself admits, he had not designed
a "grandiose four-part structure." Each novel has an autonomous existence; but with the completion of each he feels that he has something more to say on the subject. This brings into being the next novel. It explains why each succeeding volume echoes events, words and images of the preceding volume. The rhythms thus introduced create a holistic pattern in which the novels remain related to each other. As the novels grow from strength to strength, however, belying Scott's hopes that the next would be the last, he encounters serious difficulties in drawing all the disparate elements into focus for the conclusion. A Division has therefore unique structural problems. The need to keep the volume self-contained as well as the repetitive style in which Scott writes necessitates the reincorporation of all the major thematic preoccupations. Additionally, it helps to readjust the narrative focus of the novel.

The themes of The Jewel and The Scorpion appear in A Division in the form of a series of analepsis. Creating a second order narrativity, these analepses halt the sequential progression of the first narrative. The first such anachrony occurs in the segment describing the bacchanalian party thrown by an eccentric Maharanee. Perron, who visits the party in his capacity of a British Field Security sergeant to investigate the Indian independence movement, meets Lt. Colonel Merrick. This meeting occasions a homodiegetic analepsis: Perron recollects his earlier meeting with Merrick. He has been asked, because of his knowledge of the Urdu language, to be a party to the interrogation of an INA prisoner Karim Muzzafir Khan. To Perron the interrogation reveals the devious way in which Merrick acts.
Consequently, it opens a window into Merrick's mind. The cross-examination of the man is intended not so much to glean information on the INA as to insult and humiliate him. It is at this time that Merrick talks to Perron on Kumar and his elite school background. The fact that Perron has been to the same school goads Merrick to make the observation, but it identifies his obsession all the same. These early impressions help Perron evaluate Merrick later when he comes to work under him and gets to hear of his dubious role in the Bibighar Gardens case.

The affairs of the Gardens and the complicity of Merrick appear in an extended analepsis which occurs in the third chapter "The Moghul Room". The retracing of the event three years after it takes place is brought about by Perron's chance meeting with Rowan. Since both of them have, like Kumar, a Chillingborough schooling, they have occasion to turn to Kumar who has become the *bête noire* of Merrick, now Perron's officer. Moreover, Rowan, at the moment the political aide to the Governor of the province, has been the reviewer of the political detention of Kumar. He informs Perron of the sorry pass that Kumar has come to in India. The novel returns, as it were, through this talk to the past life of Kumar. Perron makes a vivid recreation of the Mayapore affair on the strength of what Rowan tells him. It includes the early background of Kumar, his life in England and his return to India under disgraceful circumstances, his showdown with Merrick at Ludmila's Sanctuary, his falling in love with Daphne and his eventual arrest on a charge
of leading a criminal assault on her—events that constitute the bulk of The Jewel's narrative surface. Since Rowan's own knowledge of the events comes from what he learns of them during the interrogation, the novel, even while referring to The Jewel, presents in a nutshell one of the three story-lines of The Scorpion. The interrogation, a typescript of which Rowan gives to Perron, deals with the entire life of Kumar till his incarceration on a trumped-up political offence. It dwells at length on the behaviour of Colin Lindsey, Kumar's best friend in England, which turns out to be the one turning point in his life. His refusal to recognize Kumar while in India is the reason why Kumar gets drunk in the company of known political activists and becomes a marked man in Merrick's book when he has a confrontation with him at the Sanctuary to which he has been brought in a stupor.

The function of this analepsis in relation to the first narrative is manifold. The reiteration of the leitmotif of rape puts emphasis on the question of the British-Indian relationship. Further, it makes a chronological update on Kumar's present fate. It thus establishes continuity. It leads, for example, to the textual announcement that Kumar has been set free after the interrogation. Since analepsis is part of Perron's speech act, it is centred through the attitude that he strikes towards both Rowan and Kumar. Indeed, he critically evaluates Rowan's assessment of the situation Kumar is in. Rowan's recommendations bring Kumar freedom; but his belief is like a pendulum, inclined to
give Merrick the benefit of doubt. Perron on the other hand is absolutely convinced of his innocence and of Merrick's complic- ity. He therefore castigates Rowan's vacillation.

Simply, he would remain appalled and puzzled, a man with a conscience that worked in favour of both men; more in favour of Kumar than of Merrick; but Merrick was given sufficient benefit of the liberal doubt to leave Rowan inert. What Rowan was doing in telling me all this, was trying to set off against his own inertia someone else's positive action: mine. He wanted me to do what he could not do: help Kumar. His ideas on the subject, it goes without saying, were woolly. (369).

A Division is secured to The Scorpion in a further instance of an analepsis in which Rowan recalls his brief encounter with Sarah at the Ranpur railway platform. The encounter is reported in The Scorpion through Sarah's focalization which is why Rowan's point of view is suppressed. By taking it up again through Rowan's focalization, A Division brings forward the question of the position of the Laytons in the overall structuration of The Quartet. It has been observed that the Laytons symbolize the personal relationship of the British modified and conditioned by their experience of India. Moreover, the change in focalizer contributes to the heterogeneity of the focalized's subjectivity. Rowan finds in Sarah "the serenity of understood experience
and the vitality of undiminished appetite" (184), a set of traits that is subsequently seconded by her own self-apprehension. This type of characterization draws on Scott's notion of what a character ought to be: "Three things are to be considered; a man's estimate of himself, the face he presents to the world, the estimate of that man made by other men. Combined, they form an aspect of truth." With a mind in possession of itself, uncluttered by any pre-formed notions of racial superiority and for ever intent on taking in the profundity of the experiencing life, Sarah has been shown in The Scorpion to be veering towards the novel's centre of values. Both as a diegetic character and an intradiegetic narrator she has been the touchstone against which events and characters are valued. In A Division, too, she occupies an equally important position. Two of the textual segments which deal with the Laytons are either focalized or narrated by Sarah.

The place of pre-eminence in A Division is really occupied by Perron. Designed to bring a breath of fresh air as well as to unify the various movements of The Quartet, Perron is presented as a character "who's making a study of British-Indian history," especially from" 1830 to the Mutiny" (114). The fear of the Mutiny as the underlying psychological motivation of the British excesses in 1942 has been one of the themes of The Jewel: the creation of a character who is interested in the history of the Mutiny and is assigned in the novel to collecting intelligence on the INA and the rumoured possibility of a popular movement to
free the INA prisoners(57) is calculated to effect a parity between the Mutiny and the INA. Historically, both the events are forms of armed resistance by Indians to the continuation of the foreign rule in India. Perron's academic interest and professional position have an important bearing on the meaning of the novel. One of the reasons for the outbreak of the Mutiny of 1857 has been the British annexation of the princely states on grounds of mis-rule. As a historian Perron both reads history and sees history in the making. He notes, for example, the transition from the British assumption of responsibility for the good governance of these states to their ultimate disowning of any obligation for them. The lurch in which the princely states are left on the eve of the independence is only one of the fall-outs of the precipitate British withdrawal from India. It is Perron who maps out the areas of waste in political and human terms. Even where his discourse is limited to his own accounts or to the narratorial reconstructions of his perceptions, it is his consciousness that ideologically orients the novel. K.B. Rao finds in Perron's unifying functions the chorus effect of the Greek drama.

The status of Perron as the principal character-narrator of the novel highlights the differential relation between him and the central narrator. It is not a matter of coincidence that both of them are deeply involved in the study of history. While Perron is a professional historian, the primary narrator is an amateur. The repeated use of historians as the narrating
agents betrays Scott's own concern with history, especially with its morality. The primary narrator identified under different nomenclature re-enters the novel as a traveller in 'Journeys into Uneasy Distances':"For an instant the traveller conjures images of flames, of silhouetted human shapes running distractingly, stooped under burdens" (139). The function of the narrator has been defined in *The Jewel* as that of gathering information on the Mayapore tragedy. In *A Division*, however, his function is appropriated by Perron. The narrator is the narrating subject functioning as a stand-in for Scott who is the speaking subject of the text. But he acts as a stand-in for the narrator. The successive replacement of one stand-in by another produces a structural maze which is aptly commensurate with the picture of collapse and dispersal that the novel presents. Seeking to impose an intelligible order on the imbroglio, Perron is himself caught up in the flux of the situations. Consequently his speech-acts exhibit a preponderant inclination towards disjointed, grammar-free sentence formation.


The transcription of inchoate figural thoughts drawing on the stream of consciousness technique seeks to capture Perron's pre-verbal feelings and sensations. The use of broken syntax in the language matches the fluidity of the prevailing political situation.
As a historian, Perron brings his unprejudiced and neutral views to bear on his assessment of the Raj's attempt to evade its responsibility. It is Perron who watches the series of cartoons by Halki, an Indian cartoonist satirizing the machinations on the political scenario of India. The novel makes an ingenious use of the cartoons for the purpose of historical documentation. The cartoons provide an off-centre ironic commentary on the wrangle for power between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, the growing demand by the League for secession, the haste of the newly elected socialist Government in England in preponing the Indian independence. It is Perron again who sees the collapse of the nationalist aspirations of Kasim for a unified and communally homogenized India under the weight of the separationist politics of the League most emphatically represented by Kasim's elder son Sayed. The communal violence that grips Mirat in the wake of the proposed partition finds the most involved spectator in Perron. Perron sees not only the fate of the people caught in a frenzy of arson and killing but also the bleak future of the princely states such as Mirat. The Nawab of this particular state has been democratizing the state under the stewardship of his Prime Minister Bronowsky in the hope of someday becoming an equal partner in the League of Nations after Indian independence. He notices the manoeuvre of a few British bureaucrats who encourage the rulers of these states to resist merger with the British India, knowing fully well that such a course is neither open to them nor feasible under the circumstances. He examines above all else the kind of political expediency that envelops the eventual transfer of power.
As a human being, Perron is sympathetic to the victims of the Raj. The co-presence of empathy and detachment in his psychological make-up makes him an ideal centre of the novel, as Sarah has been in *The Scorpion*—tolerant and liberal. He is not simply a prosaic, cut-and-dried historian but an involved human being. He provides a strong romantic angle to the novel by falling in love with Sarah. A deep sense of humanism manifests itself in the involved way in which he gleans information on the conditions of Kumar after his release from imprisonment. In his approach to the Laytons he is equally solicitous. Because of his close association with the family, he becomes a witness to the fissures in the troubled family erupting into the open. Perron thus unifies through the dynamism of his personal and professional capacity the political, social and interpersonal dimensions of the British-Indian relationship.

The novel incidentally inscribes a slash-mark in the subjectivity of Perron. On the one hand he is the anti-nostalgic historian exploring the reasons for the eventual failure of this multi-dimensional relationship between Britain and India; on the other hand he is a fallible human being grieving for the passing away of an order, of a way of life established for at least two centuries. One of the things with which Perron leaves India is a book of poems by Gaffur. The placement of one of the poems in the anthology at the end of the novel reinforces this idea of the transitoriness of things.
But she had gone,
As seasons go, as a night flower closes in the day,
As a hawk flies into the sun or as the cheetah runs; as
The deer pauses, sun-dappled in long grass,
But does not stay (719).

The transience suggested in the stanza conveys a nostalgic melancholia at the loss of a country. There is perfect correlation between the meaning of the poem and the thought of Perron at the precise moment of reading it. The novel in fact uses the poem as a verbalized artefact of Perron's pre-linguistic feelings.

Perron replaced the unfinished letter between the pages of the book Dmitri had given him. He stared out of the port. Far below, dim isolated points of light marked the villages of India—the India his countrymen were leaving, the India that was being given up. Along with what else? (719)

Perron has an intuitive understanding of what the loss of India entails in the lives of the Laytons and the Muirs, the families which have acquired an upper-class identity only because of their connection with India. The novel circulates this theme of loss and nostalgia in the multifarious discourses of the characters. John Layton, for example, tells Sarah
... isn't it India that's given us whatever distinction we have? Without India, I wonder what we'd have been? Lawyers like my grandfather? Merchants like his father? And on the Muir side Scottish crofters? A long way back, but not all that long way it's only a difference in timing. India's always been an opportunity for quite ordinary English people—it's given us the chance to live and work like, well, a ruling class that few of us could really claim to belong to (450).

In summing up the theme, Perron harks back to Scott's own engagement with the matter. Swinden makes a pertinent observation in this regard: "From the beginning of his career as a novelist (Scott) has been preoccupied with paradises that are already lost, and he has sought to bring his characters to terms with that loss." 8

Perron ties up the failure of the political relations between India and Britain with the failure of human relations. In other words he tries to see the history of England in India in the lives of individual actors. Trying to interest a motley group of British soldiers freshly come from home, Perron realizes how ignorance has played a major part in British-Indian political relations. With the tone of the novel set thus, there is a subtle change in focus from the British in India to the
British in Britain. Unlike the other volumes in *The Quartet*, *A Division* gives expression to the reactions of the British living on their own homeland to the affairs of India.

... India itself, as itself... has played no part whatsoever in the lives of Englishmen in general (no part that we are conscious of) and those who came out (those for whom India had to play a real part) became detached both from English life and from the English idea of life. Getting rid of India will cause us at home no qualm of conscience because it will be like getting rid of what is no longer reflected in our mirror of ourselves. The sad thing is that whereas in the English mirror there is now no Indian reflection, in the Indian mirror the English reflection may be very hard to get rid of, because in the Indian mind English possession has not been an idea but a reality; often a harsh one.... The most insular people in the world managed to establish the largest empire the world has ever seen (135–136).

This indifference by the British to India is the basis by which they rationalize the skirting of their responsibility for the plight of the Indians caught in a simultaneous movement towards independence and disintegration. The disowning of any moral commitment finds its most vociferous spokesperson in Purvis, who represents the new school of economic thought which believes
that India is a serious strain on Britain's exchequer. The temporary commanding officer of Perron, Purvis is firmly in line with the socialist government's thinking which makes the quick off-loading of India an article of faith. So wrapped up is he by considerations of economy that he chooses to suffer from deliberate amnesia: he refuses to acknowledge any material benefit that Britain may have had from its imperial possession or that the fatal political division of India is the fall-out of the policy of divide and rule that Britain has always followed in order to secure its hold on India. In a conversation with Perron he refutes outright any such insinuation and rejects the notions of any duty on the part of Britain to India:

'Wouldn't that be rather unfair, sir? Historically, we have a moral obligation, surely?'

'I could not disagree more. Moral obligation! What next? It's disastrous ever to feel a moral obligation for other people's mistakes.'(46)

Logically extended, such a mindset produces an utter insensitivity to the large-scale tragedy created by the pre-partition communal violence. The most forceful dramatization of this attitude is presented through Perron's aunt Charlotte. Perron likens her views to those of Purvis and summarizes them in one of his long monologues.
... I never told Aunt Charlotte that she, as well as I, was responsible for the one quarter million deaths in the Punjab and elsewhere. But I did once ask her who, in her opinion, was responsible. She said, 'But that is obvious: the people who attacked and killed each other.' There was no arguing with this, but it confirmed my impression of her historical significance (and mine), of the overwhelming importance of the part that had been played in British-Indian affairs by the indifference and the ignorance of the English at home—whom Aunt Charlotte in an especially poignant way, had in my mind come to represent, .... (A Division 271).

Charlotte totalizes in her person the common Englishman's complete ignorance of India. The insouciance exhibited towards the problems of the country, which are incidentally the creations of the British themselves, is the natural outcome of such a position.

The pressing problem for the Indian subcontinent poised for its long-awaited independence relates to the communal division which threatens to undo the very foundation of the new nation. A Division underplays the communal violence; nowhere does it directly present pictures of frenzy and mayhem which are in fact common sights before and during the partition. These pictures tend to emerge, indirectly, in the comments and observations of
characters who refer to them while elucidating other points of concern. Sarah refers to it while pointing out Merrick's efficient handling of the communal situation in Mirat. Similarly, Macpherson, secretary of Mirat club, broaches the subject in the course of his conversation with Perron. The restraint exercised in the narration of the Hindu-Muslim civil war produces a horrifying effect when the massacre is given a condensed expression in the famous train scene in which Ahmed, the non-political playboy younger son of Kasim, is hacked to pieces by Hindu rioters.

In a complex arrangement of events, *A Division* joins up the questions of communal violence and politics with those of the INA. One of the story-lines of *The Scorpion* concerning Kasim and his political career, left unresolved in that novel, reaches its denouement here. To that end, *The Scorpion* achieves its real closure in *A Division*. Kasim's release at the end of *The Scorpion*, procured in order that he may talk to his elder son Sayed, has opened up several possibilities, each equally painful, with regard to his future plan of action. Sayed, who has joined the INA, has moreover accepted the inevitability of the 'two nations' theory and of the formation of Pakistan. In the conversation between the father and the son monitored by none other than Lt. Col Merrick, Sayed impresses his father with the necessity of defending him because that would be a definite way in which his career can be ensured. Sayed is neither repentant nor apologetic about his joining the INA. In fact, he finds the INA an honourable
way out of the partiality of his commanding officer on the battle front. Faced with the prospect of imminent defeat, the officer has obviously separated the English soldiers and officers from their Indian counterparts and handed the latter over to the Japanese. Moreover, the news of his father's arrest, coupled with a general feeling that the British in 1942 have come to the end of themselves, has worn down whatever resistance he has had against joining the INA. In addition to this, he puts forth, most cogently, the reasons why his father should go over to the Muslim League. In A Division Sayed is made to represent the basic tenets on which the League demand of a separate state has been based.  

(The British ) will hand us over to Gandhi and Nehru and Patel- and then where will you be, father? How can you trust Congress as a whole? How can you imagine that just because you've been useful to them in the past you- a Muslim- will be allowed to remain useful when they have power? They will squeeze you out at the first convenient opportunity. Congress is a Hindu party whatever they pretend. They will exploit us as badly as the British have done, probably worse. There's only one answer and that is to seize what we can for ourselves and run things our own way from there (521).

To Kasim courting either of the alternatives outlined by
Sayed would be tantamount to compromising his own personal integrity. A refusal to at least defend his son as an INA prisoner would not only bring about his political death, but also deliver him into the British hands, for his release has been secured for his known antipathy to the INA. The character of Kasim, presented first in *The Scorpion* as a man committed to values in public life, is complete in *A Division* when he chooses the difficult option of neither defending his son nor criticizing the INA. Similarly, in his scheme of values joining the Muslim League would be an act of opportunism. It would also amount to ratifying the divisionist demand of the League which would run counter to his own fond dream of a unified country. He goes on a temporary political exile as the best possible answer to his predicament. He tells Ahmed: "To me Sayed is a man whose actions remain indefensible because he broke his word, he broke his contract. It follows that I cannot break mine. Never in my life shall I go over to Jinnah" (530).

Kasim's principled stand on a matter which affects his own life as well as that of the nation symbolizes the hope in 'Pandora's Box'. The last chapter of the book, fittingly so called, presents a general picture of things falling apart, of old orders crumbling down. The Ranpur Gazette, which publishes an article on the future of the princely states after the lapse of Paramountcy, concludes by saying: "Classical scholars will recall that hope was the only thing that didn't fly out of Pandora's Box but remained obstinately at the bottom" (635). Kasim's act of courage stands for a metaphoric counter-movement against the
despair that dominates the days preceding the Indian independence. The newspaper report which cites the Greek myth as the means of coming to terms with the prevailing political situation really refers to the relationship of the Crown with the native states of India. Perron, who gets to read the write-up, is led by it to reflect upon the retracing of the British promise made to these states.

The choice of Mirat as the setting of A Division is in this context extremely relevant. It is a princely state with a Muslim ruler and a large Hindu population. Like the other hundred such states scattered in and around the British India, Mirat has entered into treaties with the British Crown which assure them of their princely privileges and of full autonomy except in matters of external affairs and national defence (629). These assurances are informally enshrined in the doctrine of Paramountcy. The doctrine lapses as soon as the British hand over power to their successors in British India. What bothers the Indian princes according to the Gazette is the legitimacy of whosoever receives power from the British to rule over the States.

Perron who watches the shady negotiations between the ruler of Mirat and Sir Robert Conway, political agent of Gopalakand, following which the ruler feels inclined to declare himself completely independent, is not concerned with either the ethics of the perpetuation of feudal rule in a few states or the
feasibility of the British Crown performing their side of the bargain with the rulers once they fold up their presence in India: what concerns him is the total refusal of the British to do anything about their implied pledges to these states. He sees in this abandonment of promise the general apathy to the human tragedy; in their decision for a rushed departure, the British fail to take into account the partition and independence-related problems.

The disturbance on the political front is mirrored on the domestic front of the Laytons. The changing equilibrium among the members of the family, the growing rifts among them occupy a large part of the novel signifying thereby the integral part that the Laytons play in The Quartet. An important change already noted in The Towers relates to the transformation of the rose garden of Rose Cottage to a tennis court. Mildred, who effects the change, does not play tennis herself; she does so in order to be one-up in the power game that she has always played with Mabel. In order to maintain the facade of white solidarity in India, Mildred does not vent her displeasure against Mabel. Barbie, who is almost a surrogate of Mabel, takes the full brunt of Mildred's wrath which does not escape her even after her death. Mildred's enmity of Barbie arises out of the sense of dispossession that she feels with Barbie's intrusion into Mabel's property. What makes her really angry is Barbie's harping on her forgotten promise regarding Mabel's place of burial. The
forgotten promise, as has been noted, stands for an individual failure of Mildred as a member of her community to make good all the promises made to India. From Mildred's point of view, which sets the norm of the received colonial attitude, the approaches of both Mabel and Barbie are deviant. Sarah, who is no less unconventional in her relations with others, also provokes her temper. Her animosity to Sarah, only hinted at in The Towers, becomes pronounced in A Division. Indulgent of her younger daughter, insecure, unstable and dependent on her, Mildred is often exasperated with Sarah's sense of autonomy and independence. She exhibits utter indifference to Sarah, who has undergone the ordeal of an unwanted pregnancy and a subsequent clandestine abortion. Thwarted in her anguished need of compassion in a moment of extreme loneliness and distress, she turns upon her mother in a muted rage. Sarah has a mind which is in possession of its own workings. Therefore, when she divines her mother's illicit sexual liaison with Kevin Coley, she is at the same time conscious of the motivation that leads her to this intuitive understanding: "... I was... conscious... that what chiefly nourished the retaliatory instinct to suspect her was her treatment of me, her utter disregard, her pretence of knowing nothing while knowing everything about the sordid abortion in Calcutta..." (416)

Despite the attempt to match her own bitterness with her mother's indifference, Sarah remains a considerate daughter and sister. She continues to tend to Susan's needs with great affection. Perron sees how she cradles and rocks Susan in her arms comforting her after her second widowhood. Susan, who never
really fully recovers from the shock of her first husband's death, is mired still firmly in cycles of desolation and withdrawal after the death of Merrick, her second husband. The family which leans on Sarah for support during John's absence continues to do so even after his return from the war. The experience of having been a POW has left John a little shaken and disoriented, as a result of which he finds himself unable to take full command of the household affairs.

There is nevertheless a perceptible change in Sarah's outlook on life. She now gives more attention to what she calls her own sacred duty to herself, a duty that has been sidetracked by the overwhelming obligation to cater to the needs of her family. Receiving the oddments bequeathed to her by Barbie, she is suddenly reminded of what she has once told her: she would help others live without living herself. Her own bodily needs, for example, have to be sublimated by ministering to her sister's child. The renewed focus on herself is an expression of the reorganization of her life. This is the first-ever conscious move on her part to live life for herself. It includes, therefore, the recognition of the valid demands of the body. Made happy by the fleeting love-affair with Clark, she accepts the consequent aroused state of her sexuality as inevitable and natural: "The need was pre-eminent. An almost unbearable ache" (432). The subsequent affairs that she flings herself into are not enduring. For Sarah what matters is the intensity of such relationships rather than their duration. Similarly, for Scott what is of importance
in the man - woman relationship is its naturalness and grace rather than its morality. Since all of Sarah's alliances tend to confer grace on her, she comes closest, after Daphne, to conform to Scott's vision of life.

Sarah's intense physical needs are reflected in her love of India. It is Perron who, on a repeat visit to India barely a couple of months before Indian independence, notices a happiness about her which is inexplicable under the circumstances. Through a process of elimination, in the absence of any confirmation by Sarah, Perron comes to the conclusion that the happiness must have sprung from her love of the country.

I have been happy since, Sarah had said, as a woman might say if she were in love. In love with whom? ... The only answer seemed to be: in love with the land itself, after all; yes, in love with that, and content to be here whatever happened. A strange but perhaps logical reversal of her old attitude (598).

This marks a positive change from the earlier feeling that India is not "a country one can be happy in" (127). The alteration in her consciousness and perception about the pull of India is indicative of the change in her outlook on life. The love of India is the natural conclusion of her new-found love of the body.
Sarah's love of India, unlike her father's, is not tinged with a sense of regret. The certain knowledge that India after independence would pass out of their lives does not sadden her as it does her father. She takes a practical and anti-romantic view of Susan's prospects in post-independent India. Because of this she has wanted her to go home and not marry Merrick, who would not let her. John Layton, on the other hand, is decidedly sorry by the passing into limbo of the Raj to which he has devoted his entire life. He is bewildered by the fact that he, who has put down roots in the country, has to give it all up and move away. He is a representative of those sections of the British community who have been deluded by the belief of their perpetual presence in India. Analysing this feeling, Hutchins comments that the "illusion of British permanence in India was a significant component in the consciousness of the British nation." John's seeking refuge in nostalgia through a revivification of the paternalist tradition of his regiment marks a feeble attempt at continuing his sense of presence in India.

Sarah does not subscribe to the white-superior and the native-inferior nexus naturalized and legitimized in such a tradition. Because she sees the hollowness in the British mask of assumed superiority, she is able to be friends with Ahmed on an equal footing. This gesture is as much an assertion of Sarah's individualistic thinking as a refutation of the colonial mind: "she had spent most of her adult years fighting to dispel" "the
powerful and terrible enchantment of inherited identity" (165). She is deeply critical of the racist snobbery as the greatest impediment to the relations between the races. This uncompromising position is matched by an equal amount of sympathy for the riot victims. On both the counts she is in the sharpest difference from her countrymen. As they stand back from "the damned bloody senseless mess" (712), aloof and withdrawn, accepting the communal riots to be "an Indian affair, not theirs" (703), Sarah together with Perron brings water to the victims. The total lack of feeling for the victims is best represented by Peabody, who lunges forward and closes the door of the compartment (700) soon after Ahmed steps down from it in order to save its English occupants from any possible harm. Later he says to Perron, who offers to look for Ahmed: "They might turn on us when they take it in. They might decide it's our fault. You'd be better advised to stay here and look after the women" (703).

The irony of Peabody's refusal to find any British fault in the whole affair is heightened by the attitude of the nondescript British men and women who are intent on only escaping and saving their own skin. As against the fleeing Britishers, Sarah stays behind to help the victims. Perron finds her "on her knees, in the filth and the muck, her skirt wet through, handing up little vessels to the man controlling the tap, reaching out for empty ones without looking, placing the filled vessels on the other side" (706).
Sarah has not only an open mind towards relationship between two culturally disparate races but also enough courage to enter into a personal relationship with the Indians. If a single character can be said to be most opposed to such a liberal centre, then it is Ronald Merrick. The way he dominates all the four volumes of The Quartet turns him into a metatheatrical figure. He is present in all the sections of A Division. It is he who meets Perron in Maharanee's party at Bombay; he monitors the meeting between Kasim and Sayed; he interrogates the INA prisoner Muzzafir Khan; he becomes a part of the Layton family by marrying Susan. One of the peculiarities of his subjectivity is the co-presence of mutually-opposed traits. Various characters who come in contact with him do not fail, even as they get turned off by him, to be impressed by his clarity, decisiveness and persuasive charm. Daphne, Sarah, Rowan and Bronowsky come to respect his energy at some point of time. Even Perron, who feels hostile and antagonistic to him, recognizes his "powerful and inventive imagination" (282). Rowan finds him "principled as a rock" (259). Bronowsky is so impressed by his tackling of the communal problem in Mirat that "he persuaded the states police to let him stay on and help overhaul the whole Mirat police department and devise a new training and recruiting programme" (596). Sarah finds him an adorable father to Susan's son by her first husband (595). The contradiction in the figural assessment of Merrick's character creates a halo of mystery around him; as a result, his portrayal goes beyond the stereotype of a villain. He is what Francine calls a fullblooded character in the grand tradition.
Merrick uses people as pawns for achieving particular effects. In his case the effects are always geared to serve the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Perron, who gets attached to him as his sergeant despite the best of his wishes and efforts, is the first to intuit this style of Merrick's operation. His own opposition, for example, sharpens Merrick's imaginative faculty. Moreover, such antagonism arouses in him, because of Perron's inferior official position, a deep contempt which he believes to be basic to any kind of human communion. A mixture of the same contempt and self-importance bordering on sadism prompts him to shame and humiliate Muzaffir Khan in such a manner that the INA detenu is driven to committing suicide. Perron believes that like himself Kumar has been a chosen victim of Merrick. He has a similar feeling about Susan too: "As a victim, she was ready made" (334). Merrick's violent treatment of Kumar is the outcome of the reversal of the colonizer's situation. As a colonizer working by the racist code, Merrick has an overwhelming desire for the racial equation subverted by Kumar's incidentally superior education to be righted and set in the proper framework. In the words of Rowan,

... He believes... (in) English upper- and ruling class principle of knowing oneself superior to all other races especially black and having a duty to guide and correct them. He's been sucked in by all that Kiplingesque double talk that transformed India from a place where plain ordinary greedy Englishmen
carved something out for themselves... into one where they appeared to go voluntarily into exile for the good of their souls and the uplift of the native (259).

The Chillingborough school background of Kumar becomes in Lacanian terms "the object a " for Merrick. The repetition of this part of Kumar's heritage to Perron at their first meeting testifies to his desire for what the school encodes: class. His eventual marriage to Susan - in itself a logical extension of his earlier attachments with Daphne and Sarah - is modulated by the ambition to belong to this class denied him in his homeland. The marriage is loveless. Even John Layton, who has but a slight acquaintance with Merrick, confirms such absence: "It would be different if they were in love. But they're not. They can't be. I don't believe he's capable of feeling that for anybody" (450).

In order to get at Susan he manages to catch hold of her confidential psychiatric file. For that purpose he employs his Pathan servant to work up the homosexual tendencies of Pinker, clerk to the psychiatrist, and then traps him into a blackmailing situation. He forces him to part with the key to the private files of the patients. Armed with the knowledge of Susan's history of instability, he confronts her with such information about her life as baffle her into believing that Merrick was the only man she'd ever met who understood her and seemed to know things about her she'd never told anyone inside the family" (656). Pinker becomes the sacrificial goat for Merrick's
ambition. Marriage for Merrick is a part of his search for fullness, a search which necessitates the obliteration of Kumar. The repeated need for drawing attention to himself is motivated by the same desire that leads him to excel in his professional calling: to cover up his own sense of social inferiority. The narcissistic self-obsession in his personality noted by Sarah in *The Scorpion* is more finely etched in *A Division*. Perron, who has had occasion to observe Merrick's modus operandi in setting up elaborate arrangements for the interrogation of INA detenues, comes intuitively to share Sarah's views. It is no coincidence that not only the chosen victims but also the non-involved observers of Merrick have identical opinion on him... In *A Division*, both Perron and Bronowsky express similar sentiments couched in exactly the same words. Talking to his Chilling borough friend Rowan, Perron explains Merrick's loss of an arm in the act of saving Teddie as a form of self-invention issuing in its turn from his obsessive self-awareness:

He's the man who comes too late and invents himself to make up for it. Even that arm, you know, is an invention. You needn't think it happened in a flash, with a bang, or even on an operating table. It appeared quite gradually like the stigmata on a saint's hands and feet and side. So that the world would notice and pause. The pause is very important (254-255).
The repressed homosexual feelings of Merrick, only suspected earlier in his violent and sexually abusive treatment of Kunar, come to the fore in *A Division*. Even Merrick himself, who has only been vaguely aware of his inclinations, becomes fully conscious of them now. The predilection for Afghan dresses has been an unconscious projection, though, of his latent homosexuality. For the Afghans, as K.B. Rao points out, bisexuality and homosexuality are accepted facts of life. Merrick derives profound peace from the first ever sexual liaison with his Pathan servant Aziz. For Merrick, however, to accept such peace is as good as to ratifying what his own society forbids as the debasing sensuality of the Orient. Such acceptance negates his occidental origin as well as his belief in the racial superiority of the English. The sexual guilt of the conscious mind recoils upon him in the form of sado-masochism. Even his death-wish is related to this. Death will not only liberate him from this sense of guilt but also reestablish the old balance between the Orient and the Occident, the colonizer and the colonized, the ruler and the ruled, disrupted momentarily by his sexual indulgence. It is because of this that Bronowsky, who makes a brilliant mapping out of Merrick's mind, sees his murder" as a form of suicide" (678).

The eventual murder of Merrick is the culmination of the persecution that has dogged him since his handling of the Bibighar Gardens case. It is a kind of retributive justice for his
excesses in the case. But the death of Merrick is structured to signify more than what the cause and effect of the Mayapore case convey. He is in his Pathan outfit at the time of murder. The conventional axe that comes with the gear is used to hack him. The Pathan robe is a metonymy of his sexual preferences. It signifies, therefore, the presence of the guilt which drives him to seek his own death. Bronowsky detects Merrick's obsessional perusal of destruction as a typical expression of his self-centredness:

I am sure that finally... he sought the occasion of his own death and that he grew impatient for it. He wanted what happened to happen. Perhaps he hoped that his murder would be avenged in some splendidly spectacular way, in a kind of Wagnerian climax; the raj emerging from the twilight and sweeping down from the hills with flaming swords (688).

By expecting that his death would be avenged, Merrick reaffirms his own belief in the invincibility of the Raj. Moreover, the hope of a posthumous revenge brings him joy because it has the potential to reestablish his racial superiority. In the structuration of Merrick's expectation A Division makes use of, again, a pair of events that have been referred to earlier in The Jewel. The first pertains to the savage massacre by Indians of a group of British women and children at a place called the Bibighar near Cawnpore. The other relates to the Indian assault on a
British woman-Marcella Sherwood—during a protest against the Rowlatt Act. Both the events had led the British to exact vengeance on an equal scale of savagery. The first resulted in the suppression of the Mutiny of 1857; the other led to the massacre of 1919. The evocation of the British vindictiveness in the wake of Indian crimes has been the drive behind the use of these two historically specific events as the primary symbols of The Jewel. Merrick’s expectation of a revenge is based on the likelihood of British retaliation to follow his murder. There is, however, an ironic undertone in what Bronowsky says, for the passage sets up a binary opposition between the heyday and the twilight of the Raj. The old solidarity of the heyday has been replaced by a lack of concern in the twilight. The very fact that Merrick’s murder is dressed up as an accident is highly suggestive of this process of transition.

The racist superiority of Merrick has been the foremost reason of the frustrated union of Kumar and Daphne and thus of India and England. Kumar remains the powerful symbol of this frustration. The tragedy of Kumar brought about largely by Merrick so moves Perron that he finds himself transformed into Kumar by the time he completes reading the typescript of Rowan’s interrogation of him. The passage that describes this transformation reproduces the scene of The Jewel in which Kumar is hit and Daphne molested; it collapses the crucial differences between Perron who apprehends the dilemma of Kumar and Kumar himself. The passage underlines the imaginative vividness with which
Perron relives the existential predicament of Kumar. Because of his capacity to enter the feelings of a fellow human being, Perron recognizes Kumar's need of loneliness; Kumar has hidden himself after his release from the prison under the pseudonym of Philoctetes. Consequently, Perron terminates his attempt to locate Kumar, who has nothing to live on except the melancholy of nostalgia. For him the displacement from England stands for the permanent loss of a home and identity; the traumatic experiences in India confirm and heighten his grinding sense of loss. Writing becomes the principal means by which he seeks to come to terms with the illusory nature of his English past and the unreality of his Indian present. His essay "Alma Mater" contributed to the Ranpur Gazette exemplifies the contradiction in his experiences:

I walk home, thinking of another place, of seemingly long endless summers and the shade of different kinds of trees; and then of winters when the branches of the tree were bare, so bare that, recalling them now, it seems inconceivable to me that I looked at them and did not think of the summer just gone, and the spring soon to come, as illusions; as dreams, never fulfilled, never to be fulfilled (645).

A Division economizes through the Greek myth of Philoctetes the significations of despair. The myth holds in check the movement of hope symbolized in the other myth of Pandora's Box.
The opposition of movement and counter-movement creates what Green calls "the architectonic finesse" of the novel.\textsuperscript{17} Philoctetes in the Greek myth is the great archer who is abandoned on an uninhabited island because of a suppurating wound.\textsuperscript{18} The novel produces through the metaphoric equation between Kumar and Philoctetes the abiding image that sums up the entire range of the interpersonal relationships between the British and the Indians. Kumar who can have been a symbol of cultural synthesis is abandoned for his colour by the very forces which bring him into existence. On the other hand his anglicization keeps him apart from the Indians. As Perron enquires of Rowan: "Will anything ever really change in India, for him? Isn't Harry Coomer the permanent loose end? Too English for the Indians, too Indian for the English?\textsuperscript{601}

More than the Indians', it is the English abandonment of Kumar that shocks him into identifying himself with Philoctetes. Indeed, the turning point in \textit{The Quartet} hinges on his sense of being cast out by Colin Lindsey. Once in India, Colin internalizes all that constitutes the great colonial divide and refuses to recognize Kumar, his closest friend in England. His refusal snaps Kumar's flimsy link with his disinherited past, a part of his self-identity, and brings to a climax his hurt at his growing invisibility to British men and women. A change in the cultural setting induces a breakdown in the subjective relationship between Colin and Kumar. Notwithstanding a liberal Chillingborough-school background, Colin cannot free himself of
the prejudices in respect of Kumar. He is in a sense paradigmatically akin to Merrick who, having imported his natural disadvantages, views Kumar's unnatural advantages illiberally. By personifying the failure of the liberal ideals, Kumar gives lie to the professed goals of the British in respect of Indians.

The myth of Philoctetes serves to objectify the British abandonment of India to her fate. The internecine civil war can be linked to the mythical wound: what the myth as a metaphor, however, suppresses is the fact that the wound is a British creation. The privileging of the sense of desertion is reinforced by the fact that the only thing in addition to a book of poems by Gaffur Perron the historian carries with him as he walks away from the cast-out Kumar and the steaming India is the little essay by Philoctetes.

If Kumar stands for a failure of the interpersonal relationship of the Indians and the British, Ahmed symbolizes a failure of the political relations between them. The death of Ahmed at the hands of the frenzied Hindu rioters is indeed a replication of the rape of Daphne. Both are perpetrated by Indians. It is an indictment both of the Indians and the Englishmen. The colonizer in retreat refuse to take charge of a situation which has blown seriously out of proportion; they seem keen only on escaping the scenes of human tragedy altogether. The fellow English passengers of Ahmed in the train journey feel happy, after Ahmed
steps down in response to the call of the crowd, that they have successfully passed over the danger themselves. Only Perron and Sarah vehemently decry the British inertia that lets Ahmed go into the hands of the blood-thirsty Hindu and Sikh mob: "We just let him go. We all of us sat here and let him go" (702). The effects of the division, and of the British policies are most glaringly visible in the killing of Ahmed which presents a horrifying picture of the communal violence of the subcontinent, all the more telling because of the narrator's restraint.

The train journey itself with its motley of English and Indian passengers is highly symbolic. The movement is suggestive of the British instinct "to glide smoothly away from violent disturbance." For the Indians it suggests a new search for an identity in the divided India or a home in the newly-created Pakistan. As Lapierre and Collins point out, in the terrible riots following the British creation of India and Pakistan, half a million people lost their lives, ten and a half million crossed the frontier anxious about a new home. A Division, which is concerned primarily with the questions of the British liability, deliberately underplays the Indian culpability in the human tragedy. It indicts them all the same. Indeed, the picture of the Hindus and Muslims fighting over the mess left behind by the British provides an apt justification to the title of the novel.

As the last novel of The Quartet, A Division brings to an end the survey of the colonial experience begun in The Jewel. Through
a presentation of multiple relationships it seeks to offer an understanding of the nature of this experience. For the Indians the colonial presence has been a brutal rape, a form of multilayered violation. One vital reason why it has been so is the tendency of the British to withdraw into their cocoon-like existence, to wallow in the despair of exile and to segregate themselves into a separate group. The total purpose of these exercises is to maintain the uniqueness of being English. Where the English intermix with the Indians, it is from a height of the entrenched feelings of racial superiority. Even the paternalistic attitudes of such characters as John Layton are an internalization of this feeling. Both racist and paternalist approaches are totally opposed to the formation of an egalitarian relationship with the Indians. Only Sarah has the courage to transcend the set notions of the colonial divide. Although she does not submit herself to the ultimate test of the colour-free interracial relationship—she does not establish sexual contact with an Indian as Daphne does—she has enough of an oriental minc. She has sympathy and warmth. But she is only a minority. The racist indifference to Indians in the matter of personal relations is transformed into an insensitivity in the matter of political relations. The British in India are not concerned with what goes on between the two major communities of India, but then they, too are confused by the changed attitude of policy-makers. They cannot but operate on half steam in the absence of positive terms of reference. On any count both the relationships are failures;
they point to the impossibility of the two races living together in peace, harmony and equality.

To the British the experience of India has not been uniform. To a few like John and Merrick, it has been an opportunity. The loss of the country therefore appears to them to be the loss of their working lives. For many of the other characters India is a dream come true because it offers them the ground to work out their fantasies. But to people like Purvis and Charlotte India in the early twentieth century no longer reflects in their English mirror because it has been a financial albatross around the English neck. It would hence be appropriate to conclude with Malashri Lal: "In the twilight years of the Raj, Scott saw people, both colonizer and colonized, as anguished, vulnerable, destroyed, struck with a special kind of tragedy which engulfs men and women in the cross currents of major political upheaval." 22 What, however, makes The Quartet a masterpiece is not the delineation of the break-up of the imperial embrace resulting in a diminished stature for the dominant partner, but the search for possibilities of human love in times of turbulent transition. In The Quartet Daphne and Sarah are far more important than any other figure. 23 The end-result of the search does not nullify the intensity of the quest.
REFERENCES


15 Rao 152.
20 Spurling 304.