PREFACE

Paul Mark Scott who has revived much interest in the Raj with the publication of The Raj Quartet and its adaptation for a popular TV serial has naturally invited some critical attention. To date five full-length studies on and a biography of the novelist have been published, but reviews of his individual novels and critical articles on his work are many. They discuss various aspects of Scott's concerns as a novelist and offer revealing insights into them; but few of them deal exclusively with The Quartet which is, truly speaking, the real major achievement of Scott because his thematic and structural engagements find their culmination in it. Moreover, the interpretations dwell more on the political-historical dimension of The Quartet than is warranted. The present study, however, attempts to establish that, rather than either a fictionalization of history or a sociological evocation of the ambience of a vanishing paradise, it is Scott's concept of love and human relationship that is central to The Quartet; and the peculiar novelistic features of the text, a largely neglected area, are employed to give shape to this concept.

Scott has been a conscious strategist; he has a highly developed narratology although he is not as systematic in his formulations as Forster or James. The complexity of the narrative structure of The Quartet is commensurate with Scott's vision of life and, in the ultimate analysis, is directed at rousing the reader out of a passive frame of mind, bringing him to an area of contact or confrontation with the novelist's mind so
that he/she can be led through the surface texture to get at the meaning of the text. In other words, for Scott the formal devices of the novel establish its conditions of meaning. The present study analyses in detail Scott's narrative poetics to show *The Quartet* as a text written in accordance with the poetics.

*The Quartet* comprises four variations of a common musical theme. This is consistent with Scott's notion of image as basic to a narrative structure. The primary image generates newer ones so that a novel is constructed of a network of interrelated images. The titles of the four individual novels of *The Quartet* present a fine example of this imagistic exfoliation. While *The Jewel in the Crown* portrays an ironical picture of stable order of the Raj in a period of political turbulence, *The Day of the Scorpion* presents the Raj as it really is—encircled by a ring of fire, bent on a violent suicide. With the image of vultures hovering over the dead in the Parsi cemetery in *The Towers of Silence* the Raj is really dead. The death pertains not so much to its real and permanent disappearance as to its moral diminution for its failure to redeem the imperial pledges. In *A Division of the Spoils* the two major communities of the Indian subcontinent wrangle for power over the corpse of the Raj.

Such an analysis presents Scott as a bitter critic of the failure of the Raj, which he indeed is, but for him the failure issues less from the British reneging on their obligations than from the non-realization of the possibility of love between the English and the Indians. The failure of imperialism is a failure
of love; the British singularly refuse to enter into that kind of relationship with the Indians. They feel comfortable only with one form of communion: the paternal, the white-superior and the native-inferior nexus. Against this backdrop, The Quartet presents the daring of three women who venture to break out of the stereotypes of the colonial existence to love India and the Indians. This portrayal assumes added significance because a relationship between a British woman and an Indian man is not only a social taboo but also a rare feature in the British fiction on India. Daphne falls in love with Kumar. It has no doubt its beginning at the conceptual level—Daphne's love is hopelessly entangled with Kumar's dark colour—but it is all the same a search on her part for wholeness, an aspiration for personal fulfilment which Merrick cannot provide. She atones for the ultimate failure of her love in a private rebellion by giving birth to Parvati. If Daphne stands for the instinct, Sarah symbolizes the rational. Though she is individualistic and has anti-colonial views she never truly falls in love with an Indian. The best she can do is to establish a relation of equality as she does with Ahmed. Opposed to them is the love of Crane. Crane loves India and the Indians in a general sort of way; she fails to develop a personal rapport with any particular individual. Only after a painful experience does she wake up to the futility of maintaining a dichotomy between profession and practice. She falls in love at last only to destroy herself for the lost possibilities.

Notwithstanding the courage of these individuals, they fail to bridge the gap between their aspiration and their
achievement. To a large extent, however, it is the ethos of the Raj that is predominantly responsible for the failure of their love to bloom. Whether it is the racist hauteur of Merrick or the paternal indulgence of Teddie and John, each is inimical to a just and fair relationship. Parvati, the symbol of Daphne's hope of a cultural synthesis, is shunned by both the communities and is a social outcast. She is a cruel reminder of a lack rather than a fulfilment. The greatness of The Quartet as a literary masterpiece lies not in charting out the course of a failure but in mapping out areas of human possibility, suspended but kept alive.