ASPECTS OF A NARRATOLOGY
The fame of Paul Mark Scott, one of the great novelists of the twentieth century, rests, justly, on *The Raj Quartet*[^1], a set of four interlinked novels which deal with the declining days of the British rule in India. *The Quartet* may at the outset seem to signify the complex play of British and Indian socio-political aspirations especially since the World War II as well as the Englishman’s nostalgia for a vanishing paradise. Indeed, so widespread has the reception of this manifest meaning been that Scott has unwittingly become a part of what has been labelled as a Raj revival[^2]. As the subsequent chapters will indicate, *The Quartet* is amenable to a host of meanings as the outcome of Scott’s psychic and ideological compulsions as well as the material conditions of his text’s production.

Suffice it to say at this point that India does not interest Scott merely as a country that has been ruled over by the English for close to two hundred years. India for him has been the temporal-spatial image symbolizing the coming together of two great nations as well as the working-out of the hopes and frustrations of the two nationalities on not only the political front but also on the front of personal relationship. India thus becomes Scott’s metaphor of life. It is not a matter of chance occurrence that seven of his pre-Quartet novels have an Indian theme. Even the one successful and important novel of Scott—*The Corrida at San Feliu*—which deals with events outside India has important references to India[^3]. It is quite natural that *The Raj
Quartet which caps Scott's career as a novelist should also be the culmination of his structural and thematic concerns. The early novels of Scott are thus a long preparation for The Quartet.

The Quartet which has taken nine years to complete and almost nineteen hundred pages to scrutinize the British-Indian relationship during the period from 1942 to 1947 is really a complex text; its fictional edifice is constructed on an epic scale. John F. Baker finds The Quartet Tolstoyan in depth and scale. The largeness of Scott's chosen topic, the imperial India caught in an inexorable movement towards simultaneous liberation and decimation, presupposes an equally dense structural design. The structure of The Quartet is the maturation of Scott's early experimentations with the technique of the novel: the text thus concretizes the narrative poetics of Scott.

The British fiction on India, commonly known as the Anglo-Indian literature, invites inevitably references to E.M. Forster. Although the first British fiction with an elaborate Indian setting was written in 1880, the genre which includes hundreds of novels written over a period of more than a century can boast of a small minority of significant writers. Even among them, Forster has been the most celebrated and his A Passage to India the most influential on the subsequent generation of fiction writers. The growth of the post-colonial literatures has sought to
revalue the global experience of colonialism by recording the effects of colonialism on the perceptual frameworks of the formerly colonized peoples. The post-colonial poetics operates by subverting the naturalized colonial values institutionally fostered as universal values. The revaluation foregrounded by what Ashcroft calls the writings of the empire has also led to a re-examination in the English writings of the British role in India since the inception of imperialism in the early eighteenth century. The latter writings absorb wide swings from the rabid imperialistic stance of Rudyard Kipling to the utterly critical attitude of George Orwell. In making a comparative analysis of the two English novelists, Ashis Nandy observes that "George Orwell's response to the ideology of colonialism was the antipode of Kipling's... (he) operated from an anthropocentric, socialist-humanistic nationalism." These two ideological polarities can be posited against the liberal-humanist creed of Forster. Scott, whose *The Jewel in the Crown* is published almost five decades after the first publication of *A Passage to India*, draws on the common fund of the ideological positions. By the time he writes his first book, *Johnnie Sahib*, in 1952 with an Indian background, namely, the Wingate's operations in Burma in 1943-44, Indian independence has been an established fact and the concept of imperialism completely indefensible. Because Scott has not had to write about India while it is still under the colonial rule he does not have to attitudinize about the
declining empire as Kipling did. Moreover, he has not been a part of the imperial machine; his total engagement with India includes a brief commission in Army during the World War II and occasional visits thereafter, and does not, therefore, have Orwell's rancorous critique of imperialism. Scott has the advantage of the hindsight denied to any of the three celebrated novelists who precede him. His worldview is an amalgamation of Forster's liberal humanism and Orwell's criticism of the Raj drained of its personal rancour. Although he does not himself share Kipling's colonial principles of the absolute division between the East and the West and the race-relations predicated on a dominance-submission nexus, at least one of his created characters in The Quartet-General Reid - has a definite Kiplingesque fixation.

In his assessment of Forster's *A Passage to India*, Scott finds the novel "the right book about the right subject at the right time. It gave vivid dramatic evidence to justify the direction of a swing that had already begun. It helped the swing to gather momentum. A novel that has marked effect on society takes a long time to rid itself of its reputation as a public utility and retire into its private, some times intenser, life as a work of art." Such has been the impact of Forster that Scott, by choosing to write about the British Raj, cannot escape unhappy comparisons with Forster. As his biographer, Hilary Spurling, points out:
He could hardly have picked a less promising subject at a worse time. Imperial India, still the more or less exclusive preserve of romantic or adventure novelists, was tacitly agreed by serious critics to be a subject on which E.M. Forster had long ago said the last word.  

Even Scott himself is aware that anyone writing about India must do so in Forster's shadow.

When Scott sets down to write *The Raj Quartet*, he naturally suffers from what Harold Bloom calls the "anxiety of influence": the preemption by Forster of his imaginative space. He finds *A Passage to India* a great novel and Forster a great writer, but in order to improve upon the thematics of his predecessor as well as to be autonomous and original, Scott reads the text "defensively" and rationalizes his own literary and ideological stance:

As my own understanding of the British Indian past grows so does my understanding of Forster's British-Indian novel. I see it now as a novel with a powerful prophetic element, as a philosophical novel, not a social novel. I read it for the first time after my return from India, post-war. It was then the social aspect that I saw as central
to it - and in that regard I had certain reservations,... the reservations persisted, grew stronger the more I studied the history of British India and attempted to pass the history through the selecting mechanism of my own experience and recollections.\textsuperscript{15}

Notwithstanding Scott's distortion of the parent-novel, he does not avoid embodying it in his own attempt to write an unprecedentedly original novel. This embodiment can be best illustrated, perhaps, in the choice of rape as the organizing principle of The Quartet. It has an uncanny resemblance to the hallucinatory rape in A Passage to India which functions, too, as the cohering point of the novel. It may also be that in selecting rape as the narrative seed of their respective novels, both Forster and Scott are drawing upon the unconscious English fear of a native attack on their womenfolk. The relationship between colonialism and human sexual behaviour is carried further by Scott in the construction of events and the presentation of characters. In Forster, the rape tends to delimit an area of inter-personal relationship where it sits like an uneasy stress-point ready to unsettle any interracial human contact.

It is thus possible to see that the Indian theme of The Quartet is the result of Scott's earlier preoccupations with India, an intertextual space of multifarious influ
ences and specifically a reaction-formation against E.M. Forster. The complexity of the theme is matched by an equally intricate structure. In fact, what is most distinctive about The Quartet is its narrative style. The plot-construction, the discoursal method, the multiple time-sequences etc. exhibit an organizational plan which is the direct outcome of Scott's critical formulations. Although he has not been a systematic theoretician like Forster or Henry James, Scott has had an adequate narrative theory of his own that fairly explains the kind of novels he writes.

The method I have in my mind is my own personal method, for my own kind of novels. 16

Many of his theoretical formulations have an intuitive grasp of the contemporary poetics though they belong in the main to the new critical and structuralist modes. It is true that The Quartet as a text performs beyond what its author intends it to mean: the very fact that it is part of the Raj literature functions as a culture code to arrest the multiplicity of signifying effects into definite signifieds. Scott recognizes the unstable nature of the signifiers; it is the instability that creates mysteries around them. It is the novelist's task to fashion his novel out of this maze.

Every word you write is potentially expendable, potentially a misfit. Be prepared to recognize that
and accept it, be prepared to discard words and find others and go on discarding and finding...
The words when written, can be seen to have created little mysteries of their own... the presence of something indefinable... is what I mean by the mystery.  

Elsewhere he reiterates the capacity of a single word to generate several meanings: "One word alone may conjure for all who read it or hear it an infinite variety of complex active images". Thus, even as the author strives to convey a particular view of human reality, he is aware that the language used to do so is subject to its own regulative regime such as "the linear construction of language, the consecutive nature of narrative that conveys a logical sequence of thought, the discipline of logic itself."  

Consequently, language not only disrupts the transmission of meaning as encoded in the novelist's images of reality but also creates an alternative reality of its own:  

"... considerations such as how images are to be transferred to the page, with what words, in what order, for what reason, begin to emerge and bring - in their wake-considerations such as the restrictions of language with its tradition of logic and forward movement and its gross omissions in conveying the fullness of what is seen and thought and felt, and comprehended". 
The autonomy of the language puts up additional obstacles to the problems of construction. A novelist has to fight, as a consequence, to bend it so that it can be made to serve the intended purposes. Scott does indeed try to mould the slippery language at his command to express what he wants to.

His interest in specific narrative aspects springs from his desire to achieve particular meanings. His concern with music, for example, is manifest in the very choice of the word quartet to designate the series of novels on the Indian Raj. An unconscious emulation of T.S. Eliot, whom he considers as perhaps the greatest literary influence on his life, is also possible. He incorporates his interest of music into The Jewel where Parvati is made to sing a morning raga.

From the house there is the sound of a young girl singing. She sings a raga, the song of the young bride saying goodbye to her parents, before setting out on the journey to her new home far away.

There are ragas for morning and evening (The Jewel 86).

Parvati is the offspring of the unsuccessful union between Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners and is thus the signifier of what can have been a cultural synthesis. The song that she sings the text of which is used as the epigraph of the chapter two of The Jewel is "a throbbing plangent lament."
with undertones of rising excitement, at once elegiac and anticipatory." The use of the song contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of expectation and frustration that characterizes the Kumar-Daphne alliance. The song thus has a structural function: it makes a proleptic statement about the outcome of the alliance. The pensiveness of the song symbolizing the inevitable frustration of a union is further reiterated when the novel makes the song a part of the history of the house that Daphne has come to live in.

The house ... was built by a prince who conceived a passion for a singer of classical music ... It was said that he came to visit her morning and evening, and that she sang to him, the same songs perhaps that the girl is singing now, and that he became enamoured finally only of her voice and was content to listen ... When the singer died the prince grieved. People said he died of a broken heart (The Jewel 87).

The house originally built by a prince is rebuilt by MacGregor who dies "at the hands of mutinous sepoys" (The Jewel 87). Daphne inherits the legacy of the house - the unrequited love of the prince and the racial violence that kills MacGregor. The love-making of Kumar and Daphne inside the Bibighar Gardens is abruptly terminated when a gang of Indian hooligans appear on the scene. They gag Kumar and rape
Daphne. The pair never get to see each other again thereafter; the hooligans turn out because of the absence of leaders in the 1942 Movement. The leaders have been arrested by the British. The house is a recurring expanding symbol of The Quartet.

The structural connotation of music-rhythm has an additional significance for the plot-construction of The Quartet. In music, rhythm refers to the movement of sounds through a pattern of repetition, of relative duration and stress. The Quartet is a text in four movements. The rape of Daphne which forms the narrative centre of The Jewel initiates the rhythmic process of the text. The event of the rape is introduced in each novel such that the event becomes the single most important leitmotif of The Quartet. There are frequent repetitions of the verbal accounts of the rape; but since each account emerges in either the verbal interactions of the characters or their focalizations or narrations, there is a significant variation in the figural accounts. In The Jewel, the account occurs in the narrations of a host of intradiegetic narrations but mainly in that of the victim, Daphne herself. In The Scorpion, the focalization of Merrick, one of the key figures in the Bibighar affair, counterbalances that of Kumar in respect of the rape incident. In The Towers, as the locale of the action shifts, the incident is reiterated again in the reports of characters who can only theorize on the event on the basis of what
they hear and collect information about it. The distance of the narrating agent from the event in terms of both time and space is most legible in *A Division*; Perron who arrives in India three years after the rape of Daphne reconstructs the event from what Rowan, the interrogator of Kumar in the revision of his detention under the Defence of India rules, himself makes out of the event. In each case, thus, the same event is modified to a significant extent by the attitude of the narrating subject. This event as rhythm depends upon Scott's notion that an event does not assume meaning in itself unless the performing agents bring their individual approaches to it.23

*The Quartet* makes use of such rhythmic process, again, in the presentation of a taboo relationship. By falling in love with Kumar, an Indian, Daphne not only breaks the colour barrier but also steps out of her charmed circle made insular by prejudice born of the English racist fear of an alien culture. The theme is reenacted in the relationship between Sarah and Ahmed. Sarah's inclinations for Ahmed symbolize her attempts at collapsing the walls of her determined, cloistered existence, but they are motivated less by a reckless courage that characterizes Daphne's actions than by a cool rationality, a fully thought-out sequence of cause and effect. That the Sarah-Ahmed pair is homologous with that of Daphne-Kumar does not escape Merrick who functions as a symbol of the total oppositional forces of the Raj to any
such possible cultural syncretism. Narrating his own apprehensions of such eventuality, Merrick says to Sarah.

...Kasim bears no more resemblance to Kumar than you do to Miss Manners. But in the taxi I think there was a sort of fantasy in my mind of Hari and Daphne being about to come together again. I'm sorry—it sounds awful, but there it was. You sat there in the front seat, shading your eyes—and that was like her. She had a way of standing, peering at things a long way off, with just that gesture. And at the end of the journey, the guest house, and Ahmed there, well-waiting (The Scorpion 261).

The character of Daphne is duplicated in that of Sarah, but the early similarities soon give place to wide divergences between them. In a like manner, relationship of Sarah and Ahmed is a repetition of that of Daphne and Kumar but with a significant variation. The bond between Sarah and Ahmed appears to many to be a case of love. Even a perceptive character like Perron feels that between them there was a special kind of empathy, the kind that people betray in small gestures and in the way they have of dealing with one another in public.

...
Perron appreciated that to Sarah he could even cut an heroic figure. And she was the kind of girl who would defy the convention that a white woman did not fall in love with an Indian ( *A Division of the Spoils* 615 - 616 ).

Sarah subverts the common perception of her relationship with Ahmed by recording in her letter that

Ahmed and I weren't in love. But we loved one another. We recognized in each other the compulsion to break away from what I can only call a received life ( *A Division* 712 ).

The rhythmic process can be seen again in the introduction of another set of identical characters who grow gradually different from each other as the text moves in its chronological progression. Edwina Crane with whom *The Jewel* opens is fairly parallel to Barbara Batchelor, the central figure in *The Towers*. Both are missionary teachers and are social pariahs in the English social structure in India. Indeed, Barbie is a professed admirer of Edwina Crane. But the parity between the two ends here because Edwina operates on a social plane whereas Barbie does on a metaphysical plane. Crane strives to bridge the gap between her profession and action; the negative action of her committing suttee is hence a positive assertion of her new-found holistic attitude to life. Barbie, on the other
hand, is shocked into silence except for an occasional burst of profanity by her sudden discovery of the metaphysical vacuity behind the human actions. What makes Scott an original theorist is his notion of the narrative seed to which all other aspects of narratology including rhythm are subordinate. For Scott a novel grows out of one central image—the narrative seed. The original image generates related images so much so that the novel becomes a network of images.

A novel is a sequence of images. In sequence these images tell a story ... the images are the novel's raw materials ... constructing a novel—telling a tale for me at any rate—is not a business of thinking a story, arranging it in a certain order and then finding images to fit it. The images come first. The situation somehow must be made to rise out of the image. 24

It is through the images that the novelist seeks to convey his notions of human reality. 25 The images do not, however, exist per se: they are embodied in "characters performing actions, thinking thoughts, and setting up an interplay of reactions as between each other and their environment, all of which play some part in revealing what the author thinks of as real about their situation and his own". 26

The interrelationships of images which organically grow out of the central situation constitute the plot of a given
novel, Scott's concern with images dates back to his The Birds of Paradise, his earliest experiment with this type of narrative form. Spurling, in her brilliant biography, links up this form with Scott's childhood fascination for films.

Novel-writing for Paul always remained a process that went back to home-made films of his childhood: a sequence of images flickering in and out of focus, speeded up, slowing down, juxtaposed on one another starting to leap and jump as the whole thing gathered momentum, unfolding a story partly under the writer's conscious control.

Scott's engagement with image as central to the construction of a novel can be seen in operation in the very opening part of The Jewel.

Imagine, then, a flat landscape, dark for the moment, but even so conveying to a girl running in the still deeper shadow cast by the wall of the Bibighar Gardens an idea of immensity, of distance, such as years before Miss Crane had been conscious of standing where a lane ended and cultivation began:... (The Jewel 9).

"A girl running", according to Scott, is his originating image. The quest for the reasons of her running initiates the syntagmatic movements of the plot. The paragraph makes it clear that the girl is a person different from Miss Crane
mentioned therein but they are connected in a vital way. Their difference even as they are related individuates them relationally. Characterization of this type assists the events in establishing the meaning of the novel. Moreover, the paragraph fixes the Bibighar Gardens as the site of the possible action. Thus, the entire range of events, characters and settings is located in the primary image. For this reason Scott calls the image "the narrative seed" of the novel.

The prologue of The Scorpion which gives a graphic description of Ranpur ends thus: "Ranpur and the Fort at Premnagar are the first two images in the story to be told" (15). Although the images refer to proairetic sites, they direct to and generate the subsequent images of the novel. This imagistic exfoliation constitutes the story of The Scorpion. The fort is the place where Kasim, a secular Muslim of the Indian National Congress, is interned. The fort invokes the princely state of Mirat because it has a Muslim ruler, who is distantly related to Kasim, and Ahmed, the younger son of Kasim, is in the employment of the ruler. Similarly, Ranpur is a British province and is specifically an English township. The town as an image signifies rootedness for an established Anglo-Indian family—the Laytons—who come down to Mirat for the marriage ceremony of the younger Layton daughter. The two story-lines—one concerning the political fortunes of a nationalist Muslim and the other the expectations and frustrations of an English family that has made India its home—find a conver
gence in the image of Mirat. The gamut of the various movements of the novel is thus foreshadowed in the initial images. Perhaps, the most emphatic images from which the entire novel can be seen to be growing out occur in The Towers. They pertain to Barbie's passionate attachment to her tin-trunk and Mabel's to her rose garden. The tin-trunk symbolizes the luggage that the British seem to be carrying with them in India — the luggage crammed with relics of their achievement, of failure, of continuing aspirations and optimistic expectations. On another level, the tin-trunk stands for the mess that the British leave behind when they withdraw from India. The rose garden, on the other hand, symbolizes the recreation by a recluse of the possibility of a cultural synthesis 'here' and 'now'.

The overriding importance attached to the notion of image springs, as it were, from Scott's belief that its basic function is to transcribe reality and that the particular form which the novelist adopts for the purpose is secondary in nature. The function of the form is to persuade the reader of the density and reality of the fabric of image which the novelist wants the reader to ponder over and experience for himself. Notwithstanding the relegation of form to a position where its only function is a utilitarian one of fulfilling a purpose, Scott is alive to the fact that form exerts its own kind of controlling pressures on the content so much so that the version of reality that the
novelist seeks to convey emerges in the harmonious fusion of form and content in a creative interdependence.

Apart from the slippages of language that a novelist has to negotiate, characters, because of their capacity to mean autonomously and to make strong demands of their own, change the totality of the book. The characters are an inescapable condition of the novel because the events require an agency to take place and this agency is the medium of conveying the import of the image. Recognizing the importance of the characters in the construction of meaning, Scott says:

... a novel is about people and until you have got the people you haven't ... got the novel because you don't know what these particular, these individual, living, human beings are or what they are capable of.

The Quartet presents a veritable gallery of life-like characters both British and Indian. It has already been noted that Scott uses his characters to embody his view of life. In other words, the characters establish through their actions the image of the novelist's version of reality. Since reality is not reducible to a single character or a single point of view, the novel offers three dimensional characters who are capable of both complexity and
development. One of the strong points of *The Quartet* is its sympathetic portrayal of British as well as Indian characters. The novelist penetrates the mind of each individual character and presents its psyche from inside. It is true that responses to the colonial situation determine the attitudes of many of them; only a discerning few who turn a critical eye upon the position they themselves are in are capable of modifying their own mindsets. Thus, even as characters like Ronald Merrick and Reid remain fixated upon racial prejudice and bias, White discovers the hollowness of much of British fear of an alien culture. No matter on which side of the colonial divide these characters stand, they exhibit similar yet distinctly individual complexity. It may be noted that many of the character functions are motivated, as it were, by the personal histories of the characters. Acknowledging the influence of Emerson—especially his statement that "Man is explicable by nothing less than all his history"—Scott explains the particular use of the historicity of self in his fiction:

*I was struck by this because it explained so much of what I have come to feel, as an individual. On the prosaic level of application it also explains why the characters in my novels usually have—demonstrably-personal histories whose weight they feel along with the weight of their present, and their expectations for the future.*
It is interesting that Barbie in *The Towers* considers the collection of essays by Emerson as one of her prized possessions; it finds a place in the assemblage of oddments in her tin-trunk, the trunk itself signifying metonymically her own history. *The Towers* traces in great detail the history of Barbie in the same way as *The Jewel* positions Crane in an identical perspective. Their inheritance is reflected in their action, is subject to the experiences of living and thereby contributes to their evolution as characters. The individual members of the Layton family are etched with reference to their history. Although they draw their sustenance from the same stock, yet the psycho-social composition in their Anglo-Indian legacy prompts them to interpret the colonial situation differently. Mabel Layton, for example, affects a simulated aversion for India: "I hate the damned country now anyway. It's taken two husbands from me" (*The Scorpion* 81).

The use of the deictic 'now' is significant because it indicates a shift in her emotional register. The citation of death of her husbands while in service to the imperial India is a sort of motive-hunting for her avowed aversion which, it will be seen later, is a form of anger at her own incapacity to fight the British double standards in the treatment of Indians. Mildred, on the other hand, is a typical Memsahib who likes neither the eccentric behaviour of Mabel nor the individualistic thinking of Sarah. Sarah shares
Mabel's ambivalence towards India. She is conscious, even as a child, that their Indian background makes them feel like visitors when they return to England:

She had a pencil and an exercise book and drew a family tree, beginning with great grandpa.

She had no idea why she drew the family tree but doing it made her feel better ....'That is my heritage' Sarah said, then noticed that so far she had put no ring at all round Aunty Mabel. She put down the red pencil to pick up the blue and then paused.

'Why ever was I going to do that?' she asked herself. And retrieved the red pencil, ringed Aunty Mabel firmly with that fiery colour: the one denoting the Indian connexion (The Scorpion 103-104).

The sympathy with which Scott treats the British characters irrespective of their diametrically opposite inclinations extends to their Indian counterparts. It is immediately apparent, though, the number of Indian characters in The Quartet is severely limited. There are three distinct trends in their presentation; in each case it is the personal history of the characters that qualifies the nature of
his/her cultural encounter. The first major Indian character is Lili Chatterjee. She is distinguished in her family background, is rich and, therefore, entitled to hobnob with the English.

... Nello was Lili's second husband. Her first was a Rajput prince ... Widow first of a prince she was also the daughter of one. Her education began in Geneva and ended in Paris (The Jewel 97).

Lili is thus a product of the English intention to produce civilized, cultured and English-speaking Indians. It is because of this that she enjoys the personal friendship of many English people and her parties are frequented by sundry English men and women. It is a different thing that many of the people she is friends with have pro-India inclinations. What makes Lili acceptable to the English society is the fact that despite her conscious feeling of being an Indian, she acquiesces in the continuation of the English rule in India.

The second major Indian character is Mohammed Ali Kasim. He is a political pragmatist and, therefore, turns the acquired English values and motives to his own advantage. The dream of a united subcontinent forms a part of his inherited
legacy, reinforced by the concept of unity as practised by the English upon India.

The worst fall-out of the encounter is symbolized in Kumar, the donee of *The Quartet*. He is what Malashri Lal calls" the racially split hero "33. His status as native of the land and consequently his sense of belonging come to naught because they are replaced by his English upbringing. Kumar's father, who has singularly failed to wield power himself because of parental pressure and inhospitable circumstances,wants his son to get into the ICS. But he believes that to be just anglicized while retaining one's deep seated Indianness is not the right sort of passport: one has to be English in mind and behaviour. He sells his property in India and sets up a business house in England in order that Kumar shall have an impeccable English education and, while remaining an Indian, acquire the natural advantages of the English in Anglo-India.

To learn the secret of the Englishness of the English, he realized that you had to grow up among them. For him, it was too late. But it was not too late for his son... One son would succeed where he had failed, so long as he had advantages Duleep himself had never enjoyed ( *The Jewel* 267).
The transposition symbolizes not only cultural uprootedness but Kumar's disowning of his own past and hence his history. Even his name is changed from Hari Kumar to Harry Coomer. When his father dies bankrupt and Kumar is forced to return to India on a passage arranged by his aunt Shalini, he finds himself temperamentally in a different country. He shares the English detestation for the squalor and poverty of the country and looks upon England as his home. On the other hand, the black colour of his skin betrays his Indian origin and his natural command over the English language has only a snob value for the Indians. Consequently, he is taken no notice of by the English in India and is despised by the Indians. Not to talk of the nationalists who are hostile to him, even Gopal, the official in the secretariat, who is to act later as his interrogator, has a definite antipathy towards the sort of Indian that Kumar is because his Englishness in an imposition rather than a volitional act. The total range of his background, his inheritance—in short, his history—explains the tragic situation of Kumar. Refuting Rowan's contention that several fellow Chillingburians would have helped Kumar out were they aware of his plight, Gopal sums up Kumar's position with an epigrammatic terseness.

He is an English boy with a dark brown skin. The combination is hopeless. (The Scorpion 313)

The major Indian characters of The Quartet thus belong to distinct classes. Lili Chatterjee who is by birth a
princess has, by the same token, the opportunity to be educated abroad. She remains an influential Indian on the English side. She even imbibes some of the unconscious British biases towards Indians. Kumar remarks on this aspect of Lili's personality during his interrogation: "In suggesting that even someone like Lady Chatterjee was incapable of accepting immediately that a white girl would treat an Indian like a man" (The Scorpion 300). Notwithstanding Lili's position in the Anglo-Indian set-up, she is at times, like ordinary Indians, the victim of deliberate racist humiliation. At these moments she strikes a studied philosophical attitude to the English rudeness and arrogance. By setting up Lili against Daphne, The Quartet focuses upon Lili herself, especially her detachment and kindness. Lili is anglicized, fond of the English way of life and, at the same time, critical of the English notions of political leadership. To a great extent, however, she marginalizes the questions of imperialism or at best resolves all socio-political contradictions on a philosophical level.

What an old mess I'm in with my Rajput blood, my off-white skin, my oriental curiosity, my liking for the ways of your occidental civilization and my funny old tongue that is only properly at home in English,... These are not divisible, are they, these sights and people I've listed except, I
suppose, in the minds of the people who encounter them and decide their meanings (The Jewel 94).

Like Lili, Kasim too belongs to a princely family but breaks out of its protection and comfort to turn to politics. The very choice of a Muslim to highlight the political component of The Quartet exerts a controlling pressure on the plot. His nationalistic leanings help the narrator to underpin the compartmentalization of the Indian politics between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Moreover, by foregrounding the Congress politics through Kasim, The Quartet underlines the opposition between secularism and fanaticism which has to play a decisive role in India's political destiny. The ultimate failure of Kasim to pit his secular politics of unity against the divisionist fanaticism that marks the evolution of India as a nation-state, really conveys the British failure to be able to leave a cohesive country behind. Kasim is a victim of history; he does not skirt the mundane problems of politics that beset him nor does he seek their solution in spiritual terms.

Kumar, too, is a representation of the British failure in one sense. By refusing to acknowledge the existence of Kumar who comes to symbolize the best of the professed English mission for India, the English implicate themselves in an ethical contradiction. As a character, he has no
control over the situation in which he finds himself and has consequently far less satisfying hold than either Lili or Kasim on its outcome. He occupies a peculiar cross-cultural space where indigenous culture seeks to preserve its self-identity against a proselytizing culture which does not feel responsible for the end-result anyway. Kumar describes himself as a unique specimen:

... I came back to a family my father had cut himself off from— a middle-class, orthodox Hindu family .... My uncle-by-marriage tried to make me undergo ritual purification to get rid of the stain of living abroad. The ritual included drinking cow urine. It was a family that didn't believe in education, let alone western-style education. Not a single member of Kumar family or of the Gupta-Sen family my aunt married into had even entered administration. They were middle class Hindus of the merchant and petty landowning class. Against this background—yes, I was unique (The Scorpion 290).

Kumar's world view is decided for him by his father; he is deprived of free-will to choose any alternative. Consequently, he comes to share his father's ambition for him. The expectation overload generated by his father's attempt at a vicarious wish-fulfilment gives rise in its turn to an intense sense of being let down when he finds himself shunned
by both the English and the Indian communities. It is this double frustration that accounts for Kumar's confrontation with Merrick and his subsequent victimization. There is a determinism about Kumar's tragedy. The three major Indian characters stand for the philosophical, political and ethical dimensions of India's coming to terms with imperialism.

Scott's art balances the plot and the character functions so delicately that the characters never descend into caricatures. Forever indeterminate and therefore growing, they create a region beyond the novel in which they come alive. This is most evident in the creation of a character like Count Bronowsky who has a very tangential part in the story structure. He appears chiefly in those segments of The Scorpion and A Division which focus upon Mirat. He functions primarily as a signifier of the British Crown's relationship with the princely states; his homosexual inclinations are held, additionally, in a counterpoise to those of Merrick. Bronowsky turns out to be one of the most perceptive commentators on Merrick. The Quartet presents Bronowsky both directly and indirectly. The central narrator in The Scorpion gives a visual description of Bronowsky whereas Lady Manners provides a figural analysis of his influence on the Nawab of Mirat as manifested in the gradual democratisation and modernisation of an otherwise feudal and orthodox princely state.
The narrator identifies the character through his lameness and blindness:

The left leg and the blind left eye - were said to be the result of getting half blown-up in pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg by an anarchist while driving along Nevsky Prospect to the Winter Palace (The Scorpion 107).

The very fact that Bronowsky is handicapped in a violence that marks a political transition and that he is an emigre makes him a proleptic signifier: he foreshadows in an oblique manner the violence that attends Indian independence and the status of the English soon after it. It is because of this that D.M. Burjorjee finds him carrying a deal of history with him 34.

The multiple narrative perspectives employed for the purpose of characterization are also the means by which the story in The Quartet gets narrated. The narration of The Quartet is effected through a conflation of authorial and figural voices. This particular narrative technique accords with Scott's concern with fiction as an exploratory art:

... The form the novel will take is that of approach, through different vantage points of time to a central point of reference, which is
That *The Quartet* as a text is not intended by Scott to be an enunciation of a single narrator is made clear when he speaks of different histories. Since the characters are sketched by their histories, they serve as secondary narrators in the mediation of the story. As a result, *The Quartet* alternates frequently between first-person and third-person narrations. In *The Jewel*, the first four chapters are straightforward narrations whereas the last two are first-person accounts in the form of written correspondences of the retired civil servant, Robin White, as well as the reminiscences of a military administrator, Brig A.V. Reid, and the memoirs of Daphne. They also include a deposition by Vidyasagar, one of the prime suspects in the Bibighar Gardens case. He has been arrested along with Kumar. In the absence of evidence to implicate him with the charges of rape, he has been put away as a political seditionist. Similarly, in *A Division* two textual segments narrated through the third-person point of view enclose segments narrated through important characters like Perron and Sarah. Even where a particular segment is assigned to the central narrator, the language of the segment bears traces of the interventions by the 'eyes' of the secondary narrators. Scott intuitively apprehends the concept of focalization by making a distinct
tion between the narrating and the seeing agents. The segment "Journeys into Uneasy Distances" in *A Division* can be cited as one of the numerous examples in the text that makes an easily noticeable distinction between the two agents. In this example Sarah as the focalizing agent is distinguished from the narrating agent:

She waved again and turned back in. He was on the bench looking up at her, smiling, as if proud of them, of her; as if happy. But she knew he was not; not deeply happy. She offered him an egg and a twist of pepper and salt to dip it in after he'd cracked and shelled it ... Is Sarah heartfree still? he had asked Aunt Fenny in private, but Fenny had told her and added, Are you pet? So that for a moment it seemed that she would refer to what had never been referred to since it happened. And what had happened constituted the greatest distance there could be between her and her father (*A Division* 157-158).

The pronominal designations of 'he' and 'she' point out that the narrator is conventionally responsible for the paragraph; yet an examination of the language would indicate that it is modulated and focused by the perspective of Sarah because the narrator cannot have possibly suffixed aunt to Fenny. The figural focalization together with the
narrations of the secondary agents coexists with and not infrequently subordinates the discourse of the primary narrator. The plurality of the fully valid voices subverts the authority of any single voice and invites, because of their independent status, alternative and often competing meanings.

Scott reiterates the potential of a novel for a multiplicity of meanings when he accepts it not as a completed structure but as an ongoing process on the reader's part.

... it (the novel) does not begin to exist until someone picks it up and reads it, and that then it will exist not as the writer wrote it, but as the reader reads it. It will exist as an illusory experience of the reader which is a combination of what he receives and contributes, in an uncertain temperamental state alternating between or simultaneously consisting in, the active and passive frame of mind. 36

Because a novel has several readers who read it differently, the novel comes to have several meanings. But for Scott, just as the meaning of the novel is not wholly determined by the novelist, so the readers do not fully establish
the meaning. The purpose of the novel is, apart from jolting the reader out of his passivity, to provoke an area of contact or confrontation between the novelist's mind and that of the reader. The meaning of a novel is thus generated by the creative participation of the reader with its author. Scott maintains that, "In a novel the function of the form is the dual creation by writer and reader of this area of involved, temperamental confrontation from which an image of reality emerges." 

In the actual functioning of The Quartet, however, the expectations and frustrations of the reader are controlled by the novelist. The control mechanism exerted upon the actual reader can be inferred from the narrator-narratee relationship inscribed in the novel. In fact, the relationship forms one of the most attention-inviting components of the novel's narrative structure. The assumed narratee of the novel, his presence made legible by the textual inscription of the narrator, is led along the narrative maze by the narrator himself. In a sense, responses of the narratee are constrained by the narrator. The privileging of the narrator in the fictional narrative situation is duplicated in the actual reading process. Scott tacitly acknowledges the primacy of the novelist in determining what is conveyed; indeed, the endeavour of the novelist is to bring around the reader to his own view of things:
The major problem the novelist has is to construct a series of images from which the reader will extract a notion of human reality—corrupted as it must be by the reader's own notion, but nevertheless leaving a definite impression of identifiable human existence. 39

The general reader usually expects the novel to yield its meaning automatically. In other words, the reader wants a single meaning of the novel to be given him/her with little or no effort on their part. The variety of literary techniques employed in The Quartet is designed specifically to thwart this common expectation. The complex narrative craft forces the reader to sit up and be creatively engaged in the search for a meaning which lies beneath the obvious. The peculiar form of The Quartet is Scott's strategy to involve the reader in the process of making meaning and to guide him/her, importantly, to see that for him what is of immense significance is a satisfying love relationship rather than a fruitful political or racial relationship. The reader is prompted to realise that although The Quartet deals on the surface level with the gradual withering away of the Raj, 40 what lies at its core is love—the love of Daphne and Kumar which is intense because it is short-lived and tragic.
To sum up, Scott has developed a narratology or narrative poetics that explains not only his notion of the form and function of the novel but also the kind of demands his own novel makes upon the task of interpretation. His theorizations are, therefore, important in establishing critical perspectives on *The Raj Quartet*. 
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