## NOTES

1. See for instance the review by Manique Gunesekere, of the University of Kelaniya (1996).

2. Shyam Selvadurai, Funny Boy, Penguin India 1994, p. 39. All page references to the book henceforth will be to this edition (abbreviated FB in parenthetical references).

- 3. I would in fact suggest an even closer connection in that the boy with whom the narrator has his affair is intended I think, in terms of physical description as well as his name, Soyza, to recall Richard de Zoysa, the journalist who was murdered by government forces in 1990. Though the earlier episode involving Daryl Brohier is dated to 1981, a period which did not in fact see murders of that nature, the discovery of Brohier's body, washed back to shore, is clearly reminiscent of what happened with de Zoysa.
- 4. See Obeyesekere, Gananath, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*, for a vivid account of the phenomenon. Rushdie's *Shame* is of course the most engaging account of the possible consequences of an excessive delicacy confronted with increasing social dislocation.
  - 5. Maureen Seneviratne, in Lanka Woman, 10th January 1996: 7.
- 6. Clare Seneviratne, Editorial in Lanka Woman, 11th October 1995. The two Seneviratnes, both ladies, are not related, though the former does contribute regularly to the journal the latter edits.
- 7. See the account of what occurred during production in Lester James Pieris' article in *The Sunday Observer* (Colombo, 1996).
- 8. Ryhana Raheem and Siromi Fernando (1979) characteristically claim that Giraya is sensationalistic.

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RESEÑAS

LOVE AND LONGING IN BOMBAY: FOREVER LISTENING

Vikram Chandra, Love and Longing in Bombay.

London: Faber and Faber, 1997. 257 p.\*

Those passionate poets and storytellers melt the chains of worry with the warmth of their song Ali Sardar l'afri, Urdu poet

Love and Longing in Bombay (1997) is the second book written by the young Indian author Vikram Chandra. His first work, the novel entitled Red Earth and Pouring Rain (1995), which has received great critical acclaim, has been awarded the David Higham Prize for Fiction and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Best First Published Book. Now Chandra comes back with a work that corroborates his mastery as a modern storyteller.

Love and Longing in Bombay is a collection of five interrelated stories set in contemporary India, displaying a rich variety of plots, characters and dénouements that are, above all, essentially human. Dharma is the story which opens the collection, establishing the frame for the whole book, a frame that confirms the important presence of traditional Indian oral storytelling in Chandra's intertextual and highly polyphonic fiction.

We face the voice of a first-person narrator whose name, Ranjit Sharma, will remain unknown until the very end. He speaks in past tense and seems to be depicting events that happened some years ago, when he had just started

<sup>\*\*</sup> I can never thank Vikram Chandra enough for his kindness, his support, his stories, his voice. This review is also in debt to Dr. Mary B. Farrell, who gently read the final draft.

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working at a software company in Bombay. Ranjit introduces another narrator, Subramaniam, represented as an oral teller, one who "had a small whispery voice, a departmental voice" (*LLB* 3). Subramaniam is a retired civil servant who goes to a bar in Bombay, the Fisherman's Rest, and delights everybody there with his stories. One of the members of his audience, our first-person narrator, recounts the storytelling for us. Nonetheless, in order to do so, many voices are recovered, so that, in addition to the two narrators being presented, we hear a rich multiplicity of voices that speak both in present and past time.

In *Dharma*, the first story of the collection, Subramaniam tells us about Major General Jago Antia, who was forced to save his own life through self-mutilation. Then he returns to his home in Bombay, where he is haunted by a ghost, the spirit of a small boy, who turns out to be himself as a child. This man, a lonely human being above all, hears the voice of the boy who constantly asks one same question: "Where shall I go?" At the end, when he is really able to see this spirit who comes from the past, he realizes that he himself is the boy, and then he can answer his haunting question: "Jehangir, Jehangir, you're already at home." Indeed, the ghost of the boy is the remembrance of lost innocence, comfort, love, home. It is a spirit that follows Antia when he comes back home being not Jehangir the boy, but the adult Jago, the mutilated soldier, the man who "knew he was still and forever Jago Antia, that for him it was too late for anything but a kind of solitude" (*LLB* 28). There is hope at the end: "yet he felt free" (*LLB* 28).

Shakti tells us about a love story, between the son and the daughter of two powerful business families, which in the end are able to overcome the conflicts, due to appearances, power and money, that only love seems to make disappear. Sheila Bijlani and Dolly Boatwalla, the two matriarchs, incarnate the struggle for power and material gain. However, this is left behind by Sanjeev, Sheila's son, and Roxanne, Dolly's daughter. The intervention of another character, Ganga, who works for both businesswomen, is definitive in order to make the marriage possible. Nonetheless, this relationship, as historical marriages did, serves to fulfill the two matriarchs' desire for wealth, when they create the successful B.B.B.I. (Bijlani-Boatwalla Bombay International Trading Group), the beginning of many economical and political events. Fortunately, this began, despite all, as a true love story.

Kama is a murder story about the secret passions of common people. Its main character, Sartaj Singh, a Bombay police inspector who belongs to a family with police tradition, agrees to investigate the murder of Chetanbhai Ghanshyam Patel, a well-positioned man. The case gets increasingly more and more complicated until Sartaj discovers the secret passions of Patel and

his wife, and how their son, Kshitij, is completely unable to face that truth. Kshitij is presented as a Rakshak, that is, a member of a fanatic group which claims to be a cultural organization. This group believes in coming back to a "perfect" past of virtue and strenght, and in order to achieve their purposes they do not care if they kill. The intimate life of his parents seems unbearable to Kshitij, who, nevertheless, is let free. Why? A suspect murderer dies in the hospital and Kshitij is the victim's son. But Sartaj knows.

Artha is a love story between two men, or, better to say, it is how a love story is destroyed by the desire for money of one of them. Iqbal works as a programmer for a computing company where a sort of embezzlement has been discovered. At the same time, Rajesh, Iqbal's lover, has disappeared. Iqbal starts looking for him, and in the way he discovers how the possibility of fast and easy material gain can change one's life, and how a dear friend can reveal himself suddenly as a complete stranger. Interwoven with these happenings, there is also the importance of Art and Beauty, represented by the paintings of an artist, the lover of a friend of Iqbal. Perhaps here Beauty is like the test of our human condition, the exploration of its abyss and limits, as the Argentinian author Ernesto Sábato would say. At the end, Iqbal cannot find Rajesh. But he knows that "life never does what it should."

Shanti is the closing story of the collection, and also the one which ends the storytelling frame set up in the first story. Subramaniam, the oral teller, finds Ranjit walking, thinking about his girlfriend, Ayesha. And, of course, he tells him a story. However, here the setting is not the smoky bar, but Subramaniam's own house. The story he tells occurred in 1945, just two years before the paradigmatic and problematic date of the independence of India and Pakistan. And it takes place mainly on a train. Shiv (Subramaniam) meets Shanti by chance and falls in love with her, with her name. The assistant station master, Frankie Furtado, is the witness of the development of their relationship. Shiv listens to the tales Shanti tells him on the train, creating a spiralling structure of stories within stories that amazes Shiv. We should not forget that the frame in which the five stories of the collection are included is also one of oral storytelling.

Finally, he tells her a story, one he is not able to tell anyone else, so that it is Shanti herself who recounts Shiv's story to Frankie. After that, when Shiv asks Shanti to marry him, she accepts with no hesitation. Of course, the Shiv Subramaniam of the story is the oral teller. The listener of

<sup>1</sup> As Chandra told me, "Shanti is Sanskrit for 'peace', or, as T. S. Eliot footnoted it in 'The Waste Land', it is 'the peace that passeth understanding'" (personal communication, 25th July 1997)

his stories, our narrator, is Ranjit Sharma, whose name we only learn at the end, when Subramaniam's wife appears. The real *tour de force* comes when she tells Ranjit: "You mustn't believe a word he says." Thus, Subramaniam appears to be an unreliable narrator, one that has been making stories up. Indeed, a real storyteller.

The whole frame of the collection finishes as it began, with Ranjit's voice, completing a circular narrative. Between the beginning and the end, many voices, many stories are heard. At the very end, Ranjit is walking in his city, Bombay, thinking, listening to the music in his head, filled with longing, and love. But, above all, in constant search of life.

In Love and Longing in Bombay we face a double narrative which juxtaposes, within the context of oral storytelling, past and present, Interspersed with the frame story in the past time, that of a group of people gathering in a Bombay bar, where they listen to Subramaniam's stories, we have memories of the past and also narrations of the past which catch up with the present. The situations, set in contemporary Bombay, allow the use of a wondrous up-to-date language, a reflection of the English spoken in present-day India, fifty years after independence. It is a language full of references to meals, computer systems, music, and present-day customs. However, what remains above all is the open frame of oral storytelling, traditional in India, a special compositional feature to which Chandra gives birth with his unmistakable hedge, "Listen." Here, skillfully, the author updates the context and makes it appear, in a natural way, an almost familiar one. After all, what really matters is the fact of storytelling, as in his first work, the novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain. The trace of the Indian oral traditions unifies the narrative work of Chandra hitherto.

Therefore, above all, Love and Longing in Bombay, as a fictional depiction of oral narration, recovers the relevant presence of the oral storytelling tradition in contemporary India. Through these brilliant and enticing pages, three elements connected with orality relate to each other: voices, music and silences. They define how the speaking person, as Mikhail Bakhtin would say, feels in each moment. The dialogue created among voices, music (chiefly ghazals) and silences surrounds the stories of the collection, creating a curious sense of comfort and confidence. For instance, he depicts a voice "wrapped around silences like a call from the other side of the moon" (LLB 231), a music "ethereal and distant, which must have been always there but only now in my ears" (LLB 174), or a silence which was "wet and fresh and everywhere green" (LLB 231). Definitely, it is poetry that moves Chandra's pen.

Furthermore, in a novel written in English, Chandra introduces a lot of Indian words, mainly from Hindi (his mother tongue). To begin with, the story titles are, metatextually, Indian cultural referents. At the same time, different accents from some of the many languages spoken in India are mentioned, accents that make this English sound different. Indeed, Chandra's English reflects the language used by Indians, not the norm depicted in British grammar books. It is, we would say, the English used by somebody who fells chiefly in Hindi, a language that reveals that the intimate bond between language and ethnic identity is inseparable. It is not in vain that one of his characters, probably voicing Chandra's own thought, says that "ethnic means real" (*LLB* 169).

In his second book, this collection of short stories, Chandra places at the centre of his narrations such universal human feelings as love and longing, displaying a varied range of love relations, revealing his broad-minded vision, comprehensive and deeply human. The stories of *Love and Longing in Bombay* represent romantic love, filial love, perverted love, damaged love, lost love, found love and absolute longing.

As the author behind the writing of this collection, which he lets flow in the characters' own voices, Chandra displays a profound psychological capacity to describe feelings, emotions and thoughts, more than actions and happenings. He is able to enter the personality of each one of his characters. He knows them very well. And that allows us to understand their life stories as if they were real people, mainly because they have been depicted from within.

Once more, as in Red Earth and Pouring Rain, Vikram Chandra shows us the power of stories as memory, both of past and present time; stories like life, stories like India herself, a contemporary India which is multicultural. pluralist, heterogeneous, half-caste, transcultured, a huge magical meeting place of races, cultures, tales, voices and times. Throughout these stories, Vikram shows us his present-day India, a country that fifty years after its independence from the British domination lives a complex reality of poverty, overpopulation and tremendous social differences, while, at the same time, it is able to reveal, among these shadows, its own artistic expressions as double-rooted in modernity and tradition. It is this legacy of the past which seems to remain after all, namely, the importance of storytelling, voices heard, face-to-face conversations, human touch. A tradition that young generations, plunged into our paradoxical modern times, still trust. In other words, by means of Chandra's writing, in which oral performances are emphasized above all, India is represented as a multiplicity of voices telling universal human stories. On the other hand, he also shows us the memory of traditional India, which is not in books and official "Histories," but in

everyday stories of the people, in their daily conversations, those which are not written but told, retold, and above all, lived.

Finally, conclusions are left open to the readers' imagination, perhaps as an attempt to make them also feel the need to retell them, in order to make them tell stories of their own. Vikram Chandra is a real storyteller indeed, one who goes on giving us stories in an endless process that, hopefully, has just begun. Perhaps, as one of the characters in this collection, he is "silenced by stories that appear abruptly in his head" (*LLB* 183), stories that, written on paper, we are also able to listen to, somehow.

DORA SALES SALVADOR UNIVERSITAT JAUME I DE CASTELLÓ

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Chantal Cornut-Gentille D'Arcy and José Angel García Landa, eds., Gender, I-deology: Essays on Theory, Fiction and Film. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996. 465 p.

While collections of new critical writings are inevitably subject to editorial contingencies, their strength is that they can provide readers with varied constellations of fresh perspectives and complementary new departures. *Gender, I-deology: Essays on Theory, Fiction and Film* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996) is such a volume. Edited by Chantal Cornut-Gentille D'Arcy and José Angel García Landa, it contains twenty-nine essays which offer readers a textured overview of the theoretical questions and textual analyses one can bring to bear on intersections of gender and ideology within literary and film studies. Organized in three roughly equal sections—"Theory," "Fiction," and "Film"—these essays at once cover diverse materials and yet come across as focused and dialogically reenforcing. Most were written by members of the Zaragoza university faculty, which may partly account for the volume's cohesion. But this sense of unity is also indebted to the editors' effort to guide

and organize their diverse contributions within a shared discourse that aims to elucidate a common subject matter.

While all three sections of Gender, I-deology are informed by recent developments in critical and gender theory, the essays included in the "Theory" section pursue them centrally, and in so doing provide a foundation for the subsequent "Fiction" and "Film" sections. "Theory" concerns the agendas. methodologies, and ideologies which have been informing contemporary debates about literary and filmic representations of gender, notably variants of poststructuralist and New Historical thinking. The "Fiction" and "Film" sections apply these and related theoretical strands to specific texts, and do so in a flexibly eclectic manner. As such, these two sections provide readers with case studies against which one may assess the applicability and potentials of the theoretical approaches probed in the first section. Furthermore, with "Fiction" and "Film" focusing on narrative media, and with "film" limited here to fiction film, these two sections dovetail and echo one another despite the fact that the two media consitute radically different modes of representation (or "languages," or "signifying systems"). Instead of being torn asunder by such multiple undertakings, the volume is held together by a selection and organization of essays which end up constituting a whole made up of mutually elucidating parts.

As the inclusion of "Gender" in the title signals, this book's project is to elaborate a feminist orientation towards filmic and literary representations of gendered identities. Significantly, this orientation is not theoretical or critical in the sense of semiotics, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, New Historicism, or for that matter New Criticism. Feminism is a politics, and as such it gives direction to theories and practices of textual interpretation. The questions it raises concern the social use of textual production and reception. It fosters attention to ways texts help shape the collective ideological imaginary, to the position of texts within specific historic contexts, and to the meanings which emerge from texts as they are considered singly and in relation to one another. The essays assembled here respond to these questions by unmasking the inscription of gender in fiction and film. Using the tools made available through recent developments in theory and criticism, they stand as interventions in the political consequences of social ideology.

In part, such demystification invokes and expands European and American feminist work on literature and film as it has evolved over the last three decades. Published in 1996, this volume participates in a project which has been transforming the ways we understand art and cultural production—notably in terms of how cultural artifacts and social relations (political and