

The infinity issue becomes confused, and some mathematical contradictions appear towards the end of the work. It all begins with the relating of the discovery of a certain book dealing with combinatorial analysis. This, incidentally, is an important and difficult branch of mathematics which is enjoying a very active period of research at present. It is specifically mentioned that the book contains "examples of variations with unlimited repetition" (p. 82). From the information in this volume, a librarian of genius deduced that the library is *total*, comprising all books with no duplication. Oddly enough, the idea is expressed at this time that the total number of possible combinations of the twenty-odd orthographic symbols is vast, but not infinite. This number, however, is surely infinite since one is allowing unlimited repetition. The notion of the number of books being limited is brought forth at the conclusion when the narrator explicitly states (finally) that the library is infinite. The two notions are reconciled by the closing statement that the library is *limitless* and *periodic* so that "If an eternal voyager were to traverse it in any direction, he would find, after many centuries, that the same volumes are repeated" (p. 87). This, of course, is in direct contradiction to the earlier conclusion that no book is duplicated!

These are perplexing developments. But, in fact, an aura of the absurd is present throughout this work. From its very title, the reader is warned of impending confusion. As a structure is being erected, it is simultaneously being eroded. As man probes the secrets of the universe, other, more formidable, secrets appear. The mathematically inconsistent conclusion could be an expression of the hopelessness of our quest for understanding.

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The British and the Anglo-Indian Encounter in Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows*

In *Combat of Shadows** Manohar Malgonkar demonstrates how interracial relationships involving sex, love, and marriage have little chance of success. The races under treatment are the white British and the not-so-white Anglo-Indian. Passions of fear, suspicion, pride, desire, and aversion, aroused and strengthened by racial and cultural prejudices, scuttle the efforts of the members of the two groups from forging lasting and durable relationships. The efforts are shown to lead mostly to frustration, misery, and death.

Henry Winton, a British plantation manager, appoints Ruby Miranda, a beautiful Anglo-Indian girl, as a teacher in the plantation school, and uses her as a mistress to break the loneliness and monotony of his plantation life in a remote corner of north-eastern Assam. Being rootless, unwanted, and despised in India, Ruby Miranda desperately tries to become Henry's wife and escape from the brown world to the white. When Eddie Trevor, Ruby's lover, applies

*Manohar Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962). Page references are to the Indian edition of the novel (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1968).

for the job of a stockman on his plantation, Henry suspects that Ruby might have informed Eddie of the vacancy and that she is still in love with him. Henry cannot bear to have a Eurasian rival, and he immediately gives Ruby up. He goes to England for a vacation and comes back married. Stung by Henry's disloyalty, Ruby swears revenge. Retribution seems to follow when Jean, Henry's wife, falls in love with Eddie and decides finally to marry him. Before the marriage takes place, Eddie, however, gets killed by a rogue elephant, and Jean goes away. Thoroughly chastened by the tragic experience of his marriage with Jean, Henry is now ready to take Ruby Miranda as his wife. He invites her to the game cottage in the forest, where he decides to propose to her. Though Ruby has been encouraging his advances, she has other plans in mind. With the help of a group of people who bear grudges against Henry for one reason or other, Ruby has the game cottage set on fire, and Henry is killed in the fire.

When Henry takes Ruby as a teacher in his school, he means to use her to gratify his sexual desire. He dwells on her physical charms (pp. 17-18). He sees her through his lustful eyes and reduces her to an object of sex (p. 19). He finds her as splendid in looks as in lovemaking, if not so perfect in her accent and pronunciation. Whereas his colleagues mostly go for coolie women, Henry has shown himself as a man of taste in the choice of a mistress and he congratulates himself upon his choice.

As Henry wants to make a success of his career and as he places his career above everything else, he does not, until he is made permanent, wish to get involved with a native woman, however beautiful she might be and however close she might be to his own race. He knows from experiences of others that his career would be ruined if he failed to see "the thin line that divides fun from serious involvement," as his boss Sir Jeffrey Dart puts it. He longs for Ruby at night, but is formal and guarded in the daytime (p. 108). Knowing as we do his exclusive sexual interest, we can see how he feels uncomfortable when her talk veers towards the subject of marriage.

During this early period, Henry does sometimes sincerely appreciate Ruby's qualities (p. 116). If the idea of marriage comes to Henry's mind when he is in such an appreciative mood, Eddie's application for a job arouses his suspicion of her loyalty and he quickly brushes the thought of marriage aside. Being a man of pride, he cannot bear to have a Eurasian as a rival in love (p. 127). At once his attitude towards Ruby Miranda changes (pp. 127-128).

We see Henry's conceit and pride in his reactions to Ruby's angry outbursts at the meeting which takes place in his bungalow after he comes back from England, married (p. 154). He is shocked to realize that she had greater expectations. Though Henry later protests against Jean's accusation that he did not marry Ruby because of his sense of racial superiority, he cannot really be said to be free from racial arrogance. Eddie Trevors is, it may be conceded, a bounder, but the degree of revulsion the Eurasian arouses in Henry cannot be explained away wholly in terms of common human pride. Jean Walters, whom Henry marries, had an English lover, but this does not hurt Henry so much. The way he reflects upon his relationship with Ruby during this clearly shows that his pride comes from a sense of racial superiority.

Unfortunately, Ruby is playing a game, the rules of which Henry does not know. She accepts the offer of the teaching job on Henry's plantation with the sole aim of winning and marrying the white man, who is "a passport to the dream-world of Eurasian woman-hood" (p. 151). Initially, Ruby's mother is against her taking the job and she advises her daughter, "Don't go running after

Englishmen; they don't marry, not the pucca ones" (p. 99). Eddie Trevors, her lover, warns her, "The bloody English swine will give you a brat" (p. 102). Despite the advice and warnings from well-meaning people, Ruby takes up the appointment and pursues her aim with a single-minded devotion.

Like most of her fellow Anglo-Indians, Ruby is most unhappy with her Indian connection and she wants to become pure and whole by marriage with a white man. There are no words, the author writes, to describe the secret, unspoken dream of her life, the dream of Anglo-India:

She could never have explained to Henry Winton the throbbing, compulsive craving of Anglo-India to seek living kinship with the West; the desperate, daily struggle of separation and alignment, the tight clutching of the tenuous, often imaginary strands of relationships with the sahibs, the constant vigilance against further assimilation with the smothering, enveloping peoples of the Indian soil. Above all, she could never have laid bare to any outsider her own personal dream of becoming some day a Sahib's lady, going into the reserved, all-white clubs with her head held high, escorted by an Englishman without the slightest trace of coloured blood; of bearing blue-eyed, flaxen-haired children, of going to London for a dizzy round of the town and to gaze at the King himself; and then of settling down in a cool, antiseptic, wholly English suburb and washing away the contamination of India and Tinapur. No effort was too much for the fulfilment of that constant, aching dream, no sacrifice too great—not even the sacrifice of the love of a man like Eddie Trevor. (p. 103)

Not until Henry has been humbled by the slow discovery of his wife's disloyalty is he able to love Ruby. Humbled and chastened by his tragic experience of a loveless married life, he turns to Ruby, setting aside his earlier fear, pride, and racial prejudice. He views Ruby from a different angle now (p. 279). To his great surprise and happiness, Henry finds that Ruby has learnt to speak English in the real BBC style. He invites Ruby to the game cottage in the forest, where he decides to propose to her.

Meanwhile, Ruby has taken her frustration in love as a further confirmation of the general Anglo-Indian belief that there is nothing but sorrow and disappointment in their seeking kinship with the white race, and she will, therefore, not be taken in by Henry's advances now. She is blinded by racial hatred and she cannot naturally see the change that has taken place in Henry's outlook. Concealing her aversion for him behind her smile, gestures, and sexual appeal, she accepts his invitation to spend the night with him in the game cottage, which she, according to plan, turns into his grave.

The novel presents several other sad racial encounters and the pitiable consequences of those encounters. Though the amorous story of Jean and Eddie is sketchily presented from the outside, it seems as though racial considerations do not stand in the way of their love. However, marriage does not come through even in this case, as Henry cunningly sets Eddie after a rogue elephant with dud cartridges and sends him to his death. Eddie is one of the large number of products of illicit sex and love(?), and he dies not knowing that his real father is no other than Sir Jeffrey Dart, the Resident Director, the man who views with great displeasure his officers getting involved with native women. When Eddie's mother was big with the child of Sir Jeffrey, he quietly got her married off to his watchman. The British officers on the plantation use without scruple coolie women to satisfy their sex, and if any complication like pregnancy arises, they give them a couple of hundred rupees to clear their conscience.

In an epigraph to the book, Malgonkar quotes verse 27 of "The Path of Knowledge" from the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Desire and Aversion are opposite shadows. Those who allow themselves to be overcome by their struggle cannot rise to a knowledge of reality." The author gives his treatment of the theme of interracial relations substance and reality by working concretely in terms of the human passions of desire and aversion. His Englishmen and Anglo-Indians are living human beings and their association and estrangement are a natural result of their mutual likes and dislikes. Few writers have shown Malgonkar's artistic integrity in dealing with the theme of interracial and intercultural relations.

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Nick Carraway as Narrator in *The Great Gatsby*

Critics interested in the role of Nick Carraway as narrator in *The Great Gatsby* may be divided into two rather broad groups. The majority position is the traditional one: Nick is considered quite reliable, basically honest, and ultimately changed by his contact with Gatsby.¹ A variation of this interpretation has Carraway stumbling to his conclusion, thereby accounting for a number of discrepancies in his narration; in short, Nick progresses from innocence to experience before finally locating a moral vision.² Against this position may be found a small number of critics who hold that Nick is quite unreliable: a sentimentalist at least, and possibly dishonest and immoral.³ Hence, *The Great Gatsby* is either a deceptively tricky novel, or one that is artistically flawed in both character and structure. Both camps seem to agree on one point: the character of Gatsby remains static throughout the book; at the end he is still waiting for Daisy's telephone call, clutching, as it were, to his quixotic dream. The critical controversy merits a brief return to the text as our final understanding of Gatsby is almost entirely dependent upon the reliability of Carraway's narration.

To begin with, Nick is not very intelligent. He draws attention to this fact by stating that Jordan Baker avoids "clever, shrewd men," and then admits to being "slow-thinking" himself.⁴ Secondly, it is generally accepted that Nick has

¹This position was given added weight by Robert Emmet Long's distinguished article, "The Great Gatsby and the Tradition of Joseph Conrad," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 8 (Summer 1966—Fall 1966), Part I: 257-76, Part II: 407-22. Long, however, tends to identify Nick too closely with the character of Marlowe, as though at points Carraway were no more than a carbon copy of Conrad's creation.

²See, for example, Jerome Thale, "The Narrator As Hero," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 3, No. 2 (July 1957), 70, and J. S. Westbrook, "Nature and Optics in *The Great Gatsby*," *American Literature*, 32 (March 1960), pp. 78-84.

³I would refer the reader to the following articles, rather than expressing my agreements and disagreements with critics from this group in a series of footnotes: R. W. Stallman, "Gatsby and the Hole in Time," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 1 (Nov. 1955), 2-16; Gary J. Scrimgeour, "Against *The Great Gatsby*," *Criticism*, 8 (Winter 1966), 75-86; Richard Foster, "The Way to Read *Gatsby*," in *Sense and Sensibility in Twentieth-Century Writing: A Gathering in Memory of William Van O'Connor*, ed. Brom Weber (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 94-108.

⁴F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 39. Future references to this edition will be noted parenthetically within the text.