LITERARY STUDIES
EAST AND WEST

Literary History, Narrative, and Culture

Selected Conference Papers

Volume 2

Edited by
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University of Hawaii

East-West Center

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The present volume on *Literary History, Narrative, and Culture* is the second in a new series entitled *Literary Studies: East and West*, published by the College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, University of Hawaii. This volume, as well as others to follow, are part of a two-year research project, jointly sponsored by the College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature and the East-West Center: "Awakening Cultural Awareness." This project endeavors to address the compelling need for greater cultural awareness and sensitivity through a focused study of certain aspects of literature. More specifically the research and allied conferences have sought to address the identifications of commonalities and differences in topos and methodology, the changing values over time, and the perception of the portrayal of the self in different cultures. The East-West context provides a rather unique setting and pioneering opportunities on an international scale.

The project is under my general direction, assisted by Dr. Jean Toyama, Dr. Nobuko Ochner, Dr. George Simson of the University of Hawaii, Dr. Laurence Kitching and Dr. Robert Borgen, formerly of the University of Hawaii, and Dr. Wimal Dissanayake and Dr. Larry Smith of the East-West Center's Institute of Culture and Communication. I am indebted to them for their support, guidance, and active participation in helping to realize the aims of the project, resulting in the publication of this new series. I wish to acknowledge the financial support the project received from the University of Hawaii / East-West Center Collaboration Research Committee.

Richard K. Seymour, Dean
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Literary History, Narrative, and Culture

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The papers gathered in this volume were originally presented at a conference entitled *Literary History East and West* held in Honolulu in April, 1988. Professor Laurence Kitching and I were the coordinators of the conference. After the conference Professor Kitching left the University of Hawaii to join the University of British Columbia, and I was entrusted with the task of editing the papers into a book. It was at this point that Steven Bradbury kindly agreed to help me edit the volume.

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INTRODUCTION

LITERARY HISTORY, NARRATIVE, AND CULTURE: PERPLEXITIES OF MEANING

Wimal Dissanayake, East-West Center

This is by way of an introduction. The papers gathered in this volume were originally presented at a conference on "Literary History East and West," held in Honolulu, and the specific area of concern was the short narrative. Hence, not surprisingly, three themes that run through these papers are literary history, narrative and culture. What I propose to do in this introduction is to examine the implications of these three concepts and their interactions and to point out how they are vitally connected with questions of meaning that preoccupy modern literary theorists.

Literary history and philology used to occupy a very prominent place in literary studies; today, as George Watson points out, we are witnessing "the sharp descent of literary history from the status of a great discipline."[1] René Wellek bemoans the fall of literary history.[2] The developments in modern literary theory during the last four decades or so have contributed much to the dislodgement of literary history from its position of eminence. The New Critics, with their emphasis on the work of literature as a verbal icon, paid scant attention to questions of origin, of social and historical background. (Structuralists—with their preoccupation with synchrony as opposed to diachrony and the issue of literariness and how a literary text actually works, as opposed to questions of genesis, value, etc.—ignored the historical imagination.) Northrop Frye, with his formidable explorations into archetypes and a universal and timeless order of literature, severely undermined the efficacy of historical studies in literature. And in more recent times, the work of post-structuralists like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, with their decidedly ahistorical stance, their stress on the absence of origin, structure, reference, and their emphasis on the free play of signifiers, tended to further emasculate literary history as a serious academic discipline. De Man has written:

> We are more concerned at this point with the question of whether the history of an entity as self-contradictory as literature is conceivable. In the present state of literary studies this possibility is far from being clearly established. It is generally admitted that a positivistic history of literature, treating as it were a collection of empirical data, can only be a history of what literature is not. At best, it would be a preliminary classification opening the way for actual literary study, and at worst, an obstacle in the way of literary understanding. On the other hand, the intrinsic interpretation of literature claims to be anti- or a-historical, but often presupposes a notion of history of which the critic is not himself aware.[3]

The question of reference looms very large in the post-structuralists approach to literary history, post-structuralists believe that literary texts are self-enclosed verbal constructs which have no relation to a reality outside and prior to the text. Hillis Miller talks of "the fiction of the referential,"[4] while Umberto Eco alludes to "the referential fallacy"[5]; Derrida flatly denies that there is anything outside the text.[6] Paul de Man, who has been the most powerful voice representative of the post-structuralist approach, says that reference is the nonverbal "outside" to which language refers, by which it is conditioned and upon which it acts."[7] De Man's point seems to be that there is no domain outside the text because of our inability as readers to identify such a domain with any degree of certainty from the text. He feels that the disjunction between text and external reality rests on an inside/outside metaphor that has not been seriously challenged. Roland Barthes asserted that all writing is a narcissistic activity and that reality is only pretext; that writing cannot explain the world.[8] Northrop Frye remarked that literary texts do not enter into a referential relationship with the world in the way that sentences of daily speech do, and that literary texts are not representative of anything but themselves.[9] And Frank Kermode maintained that a "fact" can exist only linguistically as a term of discourse although we behave as if it were a simple reproduction of something on another plane of existence altogether.[10]

This approach to referentiality and texts, not surprisingly, has been challenged by many scholars. As McGann has written, what is needed is not to bracket the referential dimensions of literature out of critical consideration on the basis of an impoverished theory of language and literary reference, but to try and recover and reformulate the idea of referentiality which underlies the thought of the distinguished historical critics of the recent past.[11] As McGann goes on to point out, the "referent" of any discourse—whether the "original" creative discourse, the intervening discourses of the reception of the work or the immediate discourses of current criticism—cannot be thought of simply as an empirical datum.[12] He maintains that the objective of criticism is not a historicist reconstruction or glossing of a particular work's originary referential field; the ideal of criticism must be a totalizing one because literary works continue to live and move and have their being. McGann says:

> The referential field of Byron's *Don Juan* is by no means limited to the period 1789-1824, though that is the explicit frame of the poem's narrativization—*Don Juan* "has reference" to a larger share of the past than the period of its immediate focus. Indeed, that focussing period, as reconstituted through *Don Juan*, is revealed to be itself a vehicle (or system of mediations) by which history is rendered up for human use. In the end, what we must see is that works like *Don Juan* have reference to—make use of and assume an interest in—some more or less comprehensive aspects of the past, and the present and the future as well.[13]

As he points out, to recover the concept of referentiality, we need to be aware that "facts" are not mere objects or data, but are heuristic isolates that bring to

the fore a nexus of events, relations, and processes. Weimann expresses the notion that the post-structuralists view of the absence of referentiality and the hegemony of discourse implies the rise and decline of representation which pays inadequate attention to the gaps and links between what is representing and what is represented; it is precisely in these gaps and links that historical and referential activity can be said to take place.[14]

The concept of context is as important as that of reference in any discussion of literary history. There is a danger in assuming the context to be monolithic and uncomplex, thereby underestimating the subtleties involved in literary historical investigations. As LaCapra points out, in seeking to return a writer to his or her own time there is a real danger of simplifying the process of historical understanding.[15] The rhetoric of contextualization has prompted documentary readings in which the text becomes little more than a sign of the time. Hayden White says that it is not unusual for literary theorists, when they are discussing the context of a literary work, to assume that this context or historical milieu has a specificity and accessibility that the work itself can never have.[16] So, it is important to pay attention to the complex dynamics associated with the context. This is one way of discouraging both the simplistic and simplifying traditional view of literary history which posits a clear-cut context and the post-structuralist view which sees the text as a self-enclosed and self-negating entity.

Although the last four decades or so have witnessed a diminution of the status of literary history as an academic field of study consequent upon the onslaught of modern literary theory, there have been significant efforts made to reconstitute literary history as a significant branch of inquiry. In this regard, I wish to focus attention on three groups: Marxists, feminists, and New Historicists, all of whom are deeply interested in the perplexities of meaning. Marxists have always been interested in questions of history and it is no surprise that Marxist-oriented scholars uphold history's importance in literary study. For example, Terry Eagleton observes:

> Marxist criticism is not merely a "sociology of literature," concerned with how novels get published and whether they mention the working class. Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings. But it also means grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the products of a particular history. The painter Henri Matisse once remarked that all art bears the imprint of its historical epoch, but that great art is that in which this imprint is most deeply marked. Most students of literature are taught otherwise: the greatest art is that which timelessly transcends its historical conditions.[17]

Questions of referentiality, of contextualization, that we have been discussing so far are essentially questions of meaning and representation. Fredric Jameson, perhaps the most influential Marxist literary theorist in this country, places representation at the center of his inquiries. He is interested in the relations that subsist among texts, their represented worlds, and the internally represented worlds of readers. He sees interpretation as an effort to uncover the

formal qualities as well as the ideological structure of a given text. This, of course, involves the interpreter's ability to forge interconnections between a given text and the various other narratives through which we come to know history and society. Jameson's slogan is "always historicize;" he seems to endow history with the power of an absolutizing concept both ontologically and epistemologically. He writes: "with this final horizon, then, we emerge into a space in which History itself becomes the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretation in particular."[18] Hence, for Jameson, history is of the utmost importance in understanding human achievement. If Paul de Man sees history as the play of tropes, Jameson sees tropes as a reflection of history. What is interesting to observe about Jameson's conceptualization is that he does not totally ignore or brush aside questions of textuality. He proposed the following formulation: "that history is not a text . . . but it is inaccessible to us except in textual form."[19]

Feminist critical studies, too, have contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of history and semiotic representation; they have demonstrated very cogently that all acts of cultural production and reception take place in a specific socio-historical context, and that power differences play a crucial role in acts of signification. By analyzing a literary narrative as a system constructed of signifiers bearing the marks of a specific historical and cultural matrix, feminists have underlined the need to study very carefully the interconnections between history and signifying practices.

Thirdly, the work representative of New Historicism (a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt) deserves very careful study. New Historicism, like deconstruction, questions the boundaries between text and context, literature and society, literary and nonliterary; however, it displays a keen interest in history—a feature not shared by deconstructionists. New Historicism repudiates the narrowness of traditional historical studies and wishes to incorporate larger social and cultural frameworks for its analyses. New Historicists show a remarkable ability to focus attention on apparently trivial or strange or remote phenomena and relate them to significant discursive practices. In this regard, the influence of Foucault and the French Annales school is clear. The work of scholars like Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Dollimore, Jonathan Goldberg show the strengths of this approach. Greenblatt says that "criticism must not discount the specific institutional interests served both by local episodes of undecidability and by the powerfully if conceptually imperfect differentiation between the literary and the nonliterary. . . . I would agree that in actual literary practice the perplexities into which one is led are not moments of pure joy, untrammeled aporia but localized strategies in particular historical encounters."[20] He says that for him literature is the study of contingent, particular, intended and historically embedded works.

Broadly speaking, there are two main approaches to literary history which, in the final analysis, are equally counterproductive. The traditional and simplistic literary histories which posit a clear and unambiguous relationship between the

literary text and the historical background on the one hand, and the deconstructionist approach which denies the validity of a relationship. The work of Marxist-oriented theorists like Fredric Jameson, of feminist scholars and New Historicists are important in this regard in that they avoid both extremes, perceiving accurately the weaknesses inherent in them—namely, excessive simplification.

Literary history must of necessity deal with the perplexities associated with the generation of meaning. A more complex approach to literary history would have to contend with the fact that if there is a polymorphous relationship among literary representation, specific histories, cultural traditions, and structures of feeling characteristic of different societies, literary explication should involve an act of deconstruction; but this deconstruction should move beyond the analysis of figurality in verbal discourse to an acceptance of the fact that texts are, in Edward Said's term, "worldly" and inextricably linked to the living actualities of society, history and politics.[21] Moreover, it is also important to bear in mind the fact that a literary text is connected not only to society, but to other texts, both past and contemporary, and to a dominant tradition; and in explicating them, the interpreter should be self-reflective, skeptical, and constantly alert to his or her own deficiencies and shortcomings, and to the fact that he or she is a product of a particular historical conjuncture; such an approach will enable us to comprehend more fully the intricate dynamics between history and literary meaning. If this discussion of literary history points to anything, it is that literary historians have to face up to diverse perplexities of meaning, if they are to discharge their task effectively.

With the newer developments in the intellectual landscape, there is a real possibility of according literary history the important place that it surely merits in literary investigation. The new literary history that will emerge will not be confined to summations of social, biographical, and historical information, as in the past, but will confront questions of cultural poetics and parallel modes of interpretation. The concept of interpretation will attract a great deal of attention in that literary historians will be more and more interested in how one interpretation gives way to another, and how these interpretations over time will contribute to canon-formation and the shaping and re-shaping of tradition.

Narrative comes from the Latin word *narrare* meaning "to tell," and has a kinship with another Latin word *gnanus* meaning "knowing"; both words are derived from the Indo-European root *gna* (to know). As with most words, the etymology of "narrative," too, tells us much about the word. Indeed, questions of narration and knowing are at the heart of much modern theoretical discussions on the art of narrative.

Narrativization, with its play of desire, can be regarded as a basic human urge and a fundamental and irreducible form of human comprehension and representation. Roland Barthes observes that narrative "is simply there like life itself . . . international, transhistorical, transcultural."[22] Fredric Jameson sees narrativization as the "central function or instance of the human mind."[23] Hayden White conceptualizes narrative as a "metacode, a human universal,"[24] while Peter

Brooks sees narrative working on us "as readers, to create models of understanding."[25] Paul Ricoeur views narrative as "a redescription of the world."[26] For Louis Mink it is "a primary and irreducible form of human comprehension, an article of common sense."[27] All these characterizations underline the centrality of narrative in human communication and understanding.

Narrative is significant because it seeks to order and arrange phenomena in an understandable form. Narrative is important to human life because, through this ordering, arranging, displaying of phenomena and events, it enables us to acquire a deeper understanding of life and society. When we read the works of, say, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, we begin to see how, at the individual, social, historical levels, narrative performs this ordering function—that is to say—the generation of meaning.

Narrative constitutes a basic and universal human impulse; but at the same time it is decidedly culture-specific. The content, form, style, codes, and conventions associated with narrativization are inextricably bound up with a given culture; they reflect as well as construct the structures of cognition and modes of feeling of that culture. None of these items is self-contained; each, in its own way, exemplifies its existence in a given culture. Hence, the notion of cultural meaning is central to the concept of narrative.

Todorov is of the opinion that the reconstruction of the fictional referent of narratives through the process of reading involves two distinct stages: understanding and interpretation.[28] Understanding is gained through a process of signification, and interpretation takes place through a process of symbolization. It is, according to Todorov, only through symbolization that the reader's own world is engaged. What he is saying is that, in reconstructing the world of the narrative, the reader resorts to a process of symbolization. However, I think Todorov, along with other scholars who favor an objective structural poetics, is drawing too sharp a distinction between signification and symbolization or understanding and interpretation. In the ultimate analysis, they both rest on a shared world of culture between the writer and reader, and no clear-cut distinction is possible because both activities generate a dialogical cultural interaction between the writer and the reader.

How culture shapes, organizes, and activates narrative can be seen in the following example. Here I am using "narrative" in the way that Scholes uses it: narrative may be recounted orally, committed to writing, acted out by a group of actors or a single actor, presented in wordless pantomime, or represented as a sequence of visual images.[29] The story of the wise judge who adjudicates between the rival claims of two women to the ownership of a child—one an imposter and the other the real mother—is popular in four distinct cultures. In this narrative, as it appears in the Bible, Solomon is the protagonist. He is a legatee of God, and God appears in a vision and grants him unparalleled powers. The narrative ends with the observation: "All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king; for they saw the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgement." This same narrative is found in Indian Buddhist culture. Here the critical powers of the judge do not emanate from a divine power or a

supramundane force, but rather from human reasoning. In the Buddhist story, the judge does not pass a final verdict on the issue, but encourages the audience to arrive at the verdict. In the thirteenth-century Chinese version of this narrative, what emerges with great force is the overpowering authority of the civil servant who is adjudicating the issue. Bertolt Brecht, the celebrated German playwright, reinterprets the Chinese narrative in accordance with his socialist views in a highly successful play, "The Caucasian Chalk Circle." Here, instead of gods and emperors, we have ordinary men and women: a judge that is a personable reprobate, and working-class strangers who display greater motherly emotions than the child's real mother. What we see in these four narratives is that although all of them deal with the selfsame human situation and dilemma, the way the narratives are organized and shaped, with their obvious emphases and accentuations, reflects the molding hand of the respective culture. In the Biblical narrative it is the power of God that emerges, while in the Pali Buddhist story what comes across most clearly is the power of human rationality. Similarly, the thirteenth-century Chinese play celebrates the policy and authority of the civil servants, while Brecht's story points out the hypocrisy that characterizes modern society. This, I believe, is a persuasive example of the way in which culture organizes and activates a narrative.

When discussing the question of meaning and narrative, the role of the reader assumes a very great significance. Concepts such as "narratee," "implied reader," "ideal reader," "receptor," "arch-reader," which are widely used in modern narratological studies, in their diverse ways and with obvious variations in emphasis, underline the importance of the reader in the decipherment and negotiation of meaning. This constitutes a cardinal tenet of the reader-response theorists. The interaction between the reader and writer through the text, the role of the reader's code, the fusion of horizon of the reader and the writer have been subject to detailed analysis by narratologists of different persuasions.

The text is not a passive and immutable objective but an ever changing entity in terms of meaning-production. Meaning is generated as a consequence of the interactions taking place between the text in question and the reader's code. As Margolin points out, the literary text should be seen as a set of potentialities for numerous operations of patterning and sense-making by the reader at several levels.[30] As the reader's code changes, so do the patterns we observe in a text. Consequently, the meaning of a text becomes relativized and historicized. In view of the fact that literary narratives exist as cultural facts only in their actualization by means of reader's codes, we need to pay very close attention to the different constituent elements of awareness related to text-processing. Jonathan Culler's notion of "cultural competence," based largely on Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence, addresses this issue.[31] The code and the rules of interpretation that the reader brings to the text are vitally important in the negotiation of meaning. Clearly, the reader's code constitutes only a part of his total cultural code; it achieves greater definition by its interactions with other components of the cultural code. In the essays that follow, where interactions

take place across cultures and time periods, the role of the reader's code becomes of the utmost importance.

Modern narratologists have repeatedly drawn a distinction between "event" and "meaning," preferring the latter over the former. As Barthes writes: "To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in 'stories,' to project the horizontal concatenation of the narrative 'thread' onto an implicitly vertical axis."[32] Such a projection is important, because the vertical axis brings with it issues of abstraction or rationality and helps the reader to gather the narrative into a meaningful coherence. Hence, in the formation of the vertical axis, the cultural experience of the reader becomes crucially important.

Many of the narratives discussed in the essays that follow contain the interplay of diverse voices. Since Bakhtin's writings the notions of polyphony, multivocality, and heteroglossia have influenced literary theorists in interesting and complex ways. Bakhtin says:

> The stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre consists precisely in the combination of these subordinated, yet still relatively autonomous, unities (even at times comprised of different languages) into the higher unity of the work as a whole: the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its "languages." Each separate element of a novel's language is determined first of all by one such subordinated stylistic unity into which it enters directly—be it the stylistically individualized speech of a character, the down-to-earth voice of a narrator in *skaz*, a letter or whatever. The linguistic and stylistic profile of a given element (lexical, semantic, syntactic) is shaped by that subordinated unity to which it is most immediately proximate. At the same time this element, together with its most immediate unity, figures into the style of the whole, itself supports the accent of the whole and participates in the process whereby the unified meaning of the whole is structured and revealed.[33]

This is indissolubly linked to questions of culture and meaning; it is only the reader whose ears are attuned to the different cultural voices emanating from the narrative who can participate fully in the recounted experience. For example, an Indian writer discussed in one of the essays in this volume is Raja Rao. In his novel "The Serpent and the Rope" there are four distinctive voices and only a reader who has a keen cultural sense would realize the plenitude and subtlety of these voices.[34]

Narrative is essentially open-ended. The readers interpret it and negotiate the meaning in accordance with their cultural background and codes.

The third term that is pivotal to the concerns of this book is culture. Many of the essays gathered together in this volume deal with narrative as it relates to cross-cultural interactions; hence, the concept of culture and meaning-generation is central to the literary and scholarly enterprise represented by this book. Some of the essays included here are exercises in cultural hermeneutics in that they are preoccupied with the question of how the meaning embedded in one cultural discourse can be convincingly expressed in another. Narratives derive their

meaning from the wider cultural discourse within which they are located. Whether it be short fiction from the South Pacific or Chinese ghost stories or literary transvaluation in the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph—some of the works dealt with within the covers of this book point out that, divested of an informing culture, the narratives lose their defining edge.

Culture is a term which admits of a plurality of definitions depending on one's approach to human beings in society. Rather than become embroiled in the various discourses on culture, for the purpose of this essay, I would like to follow Clifford Geertz's definition: "Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[35] This definition relates very nicely to the concerns of this essay. If culture can be understood as the web of significance that man has spun around himself, narrative constitutes a most vital element of human culture. The relation between culture and art in general, of which narrative is a part, is a complex and polymorphous one. Speaking of art as a cultural system, Geertz writes: "the definition of art in any society is never wholly intra-aesthetic, and indeed but surely more than marginally so. The chief problem presented by the sheer phenomenon of aesthetic force, in whatever form and in result of whatever skill it may come, is how to place it within other modes of social activity, how to incorporate it into the texture of a particular pattern of life."[36] And narrative is no exception; it gains greater definition and focus when placed against the broad cultural landscape from which it emerged. This is equally true of fables of Asia, myths from the Pacific, and experimental novels from Europe.

Gérard Genette, while exploring the notion of discourse from the vantage point of narratology, says that narrative discourse is a study of a three-fold relationship: that between narrative and story, between narrative and narrating, between narrating and story.[37] In these relationships, the concept of trope is of fundamental significance. By examining the central tropes that lie at the heart of a given narrative discourse, we can understand not only the complex verbal organization of the narrative discourse, but also the wider cultural matrix from which it draws its sustenance. Paul Ricoeur remarks that a literary work is a work of discourse that can be distinguished from every other work of discourse, especially scientific discourse, in that it brings an explicit and implicit meaning into relation.[38] In this effort tropes, which in many ways encapsulate the dominant cultural meanings of a given community, play a very crucial role indeed.

We can, for purposes of illustration, consider some plays of Shakespeare to see how tropes contribute to the bringing together of explicit and implicit meanings and the organization of the narrative. In *Richard III*, the central trope is that of play and audience; in *King John*, that of authority and legitimacy. The central trope in *King Lear* is that of blindness and vision. Similarly, to cite an example from a different culture, and one from my own studies, the informing trope of the popular Buddhist poem, *The Dhammapada*, is that of motion and

tranquility.[39] And the notion of motion and tranquility are at the heart of Buddhist culture.

When discussing the centrality of culture in the generation of narrative meaning, the question of intertextuality assumes a very great importance. No narrative is read independently of the reader's experience of other narratives.[40] Intertextual knowledge should be regarded as a special case of overcoding and one that constructs its own interpretive frames. As Eco says, every character or situation in a novel is immediately endowed with properties that the text does not directly exhibit and that the reader has been "programmed" to borrow from the storehouse of intertextuality.[41] To point out how this occurs, let me give an example from modern Indian literature. G. V. Desani's novel, *All About H. Hatterr*, first published in 1948, and which won the admiration of many discerning critics including T. S. Eliot, deals with an Anglo-Indian who is preoccupied with the inquiry into the meaning of faith.[42] The protagonist, whose roots can be traced to Malaysia, India, and Britain, is not accepted by the large mass of society. He seeks to transcend the complexities of caste and class barriers by trying to come face to face with Truth and Faith. The creative center of the novel is the way in which Desani displays language to uncover the uniqueness of his character's sensibility, mind-set and consciousness. Anthony Burgess remarks that "it is the language that makes the book a sort of creative chaos that grumbles at the restraining banks. It is what may be termed whole language in which philosophical terms, the colloquialisms of Calcutta and London, Shakespearian archaisms, bazaar writings, quack spiels, references to the Hindu pantheon, the jargon of litigation, and shrill babu irritability seethe together. It is not pure English; it is like the English of Shakespeare, Joyce, Kipling, gloriously impure."[43]

Burgess' observation is a very insightful one, and the term that merits more than a glance is "gloriously impure." This alleged impurity is largely a result of the intermingling of styles. What Desani is really desirous of is finding an authentic voice, a tone and an accent with which to excavate the sedimented and hidden layers of consciousness that form the mental makeup of Indians. This involves him very closely in the imperatives of intertextuality. Let us consider a representative passage from Desani's novel:

> Damme, I don't expect any mercy from undertakers. I am working for posterity. Dr Albert Einstein, the discoverer of the theory of relativeness, said to posterity in 1905, "all motion is relative." That was his major statement, he is an educated feller, a medico-philosopher enjoying world fame, and there is no denying that he has carried on some . . . dam' fine research in motions. I am a mere nobody, but I have carried on some research on my own. And I say to posterity, in Twentieth Century, "Life is contrast." That is my crux-statement. Damme, look at Life. Life is ups and downs, light and shades, sun and cloud, opposites and opposites. Even the van belonging to Our der dam' Dumb Friends League. Hell, the dumb are barking. Damme, you need to salt to season salt water fish. Take anything and you will find the opposite. Bannerji, imagination boggles at the contrasts I have indexed for reference purposes. Example, man-woman, honesty-dishonesty, day-night, perfume-stink, saints-

> swine. I have taken working very hard old feller. If I cannot leave anything to posterity, I should like to leave the fellers this self.[44]

It is quite evident that the force of intertextuality, with its complex nexus of signifiers, animates this passage. The polyglot style of Desani reverberates with echoes of different varieties of English: standard English, cockney, babu, sahib, pidgin, as well as melodramatically rhetorical passages. Each of these varieties has certain nuances associated with it; and taken together they intensify the animating power of intertextuality. This, then, is a good example of the relationship between culture and intertextuality as it impinges on the question of narrative meaning.

The relationship between narrative and culture can be understood more fully when we pay attention to questions of social formation. Social formations consist of ideological, economic and political practices, and should be differentiated from "society," a term which conjures up an image of a monolithic entity. The deeper layers of meaning associated with narratives gain greater clarity if we focus on issues of social formation. Social formation differs from country to country, and period to period in a given country. Questions of styles of living, modes of feeling, the organization of society, values and beliefs, all contribute to the specificities associated with social formation. Raymond Williams remarks: "In the study of a period, we may be able to reconstruct, with more or less accuracy, the material life, the social organization, and, to a large extent, the dominant ideas. . . . To relate a work of art to any part of that observed totality may, in varying degrees, be useful, but it is common experience, in analysis, to realize that when one has measured the work against the separable parts, there yet remains some element for which there is no external counterpart. This element, I believe, is what I have named the structure of feeling of a period and is only realizable through experience of the work of art itself as a whole."[45] This concept of the "structure of feeling" is essential to a proper understanding of narrative and cultural meaning. Williams' idea of the structure of feeling bears a conceptual affinity to Foucault's "episteme" and Kuhn's "paradigm."

Let us examine this issue a little more deeply. For example, it has been said that the general consensus regarding what kinds of issues merited exploration, what kinds of texts and cultural practices constituted authority worthy of commentary and citation, what kinds of things constituted the symbols pivotal to the culture and dissemination of information within it in medieval Japan can best be understood in relation to Buddhism.[46] In other words, the structure of feeling, the episteme associated with medieval Japan is constituted by Buddhism. This is not to say, as LaFleur observes, that Buddhist problems, texts and symbols were the sole ones found in that period; it is merely to claim that they had intellectual hegemony during that period. By examining deeply a number of celebrated Japanese narratives produced during this period he enforces this point.

Let us turn to China. For example, during the late Ming, in novels like *Chin p'ing mei*, we find this structure of feeling at work. As a consequence of the influence of Confucianism, one discerns in these novels an interesting