Travesties : Romance and Reality in the *Raj Quartet*

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Paul Scott's **Raj Quartet** is generally recognized as a brilliant analysis of the end of empire. However, the prevalent impression is that Scott's is a romantic elegy, concerned with a range of deeply committed Britishers forced to abandon a land they have regarded warmly as their own. Of course there are problems, but these are largely due to outsiders such as Ronald Merrick who, for reasons connected with his class as well as his sexuality, acts as the snake in paradise[1]. When his destructive urges are supported by separatist Indians, it is no wonder that mayhem results, destroying the dreams of the committed Britishers as well as, though naturally less importantly, the lives of several Indians.

This view has been crystallized as it were by the beautiful television serial called, tellingly, 'The Jewel in the Crown' after the first book in the **Quartet**. The title contributes to the very positive image, eschewing the neutrality of the word **Quartet** as well as the dark ideas conveyed by the titles of the other three books. The social and psychological tensions which Scott lays out so tellingly as having been caused by the Raj are ignored in favour of spectacle. War, civil war, sex and sadism are brought to the fore, and the actual dilemmas faced by one race keeping another in subjection are rarely considered,

This is perhaps understandable in what purports to be nothing more that a popular television serial. Yet even in the critical analysis, limited as it is for a work that should have commanded more attention, what we have is broad historical detail supplemented by analysis of the characters central to the romance. Daphne and Hari Kumar, Sarah and Merrick, are considered in detail, while to shed light on them we have other generally positive figures such as Edwina Crane and Barbie Batchelor and even John and Mabel Layton.

In a companion paper to this I intend to look at Scott's women, to trace his analysis, using them as symbols, of a relationship that he believed demanded

commitment, but which rarely found it. Here I shall deal with some of his male characters, and explore the connections he established between them in his indictment of what he saw as a betrayal of an ideal. I will not look here at Merrick, in part because I shall deal with him elsewhere, but also because he has been done to death[2]. My purpose rather is to establish the links between someone so obviously presented and recognized as a villain and others whom I believe Scott examines without sentimentality but who remain canonized as part of the self deception with which Britain clothed its imperial exploits. Indeed my argument is that his indictment of them is even more important, for while Merrick might have seemed an exception the fact that he could flourish was because those others granted him license. And they granted him license because their affinities were, despite their ideals, to their own dark side which Merrick represented, rather than to the aliens to whom they could never quite completely commit themselves.

Scott's criticism even of those he presents very positively is clear. Thus Sarah, once she begins to think about the situation of the British in India, is able to look without illusions at the manner in which her father lost faith in the ideal image he had once had of his relationship with the Indians under his command. She can see straightforwardly why he came to a

> *notion of its futility. Man-Bap. I am your father and your mother. This traditional idea of his position, this idea of himself in relationship to his regiment, to the men and the men's families, had not survived his imprisonment; or, if it had survived, the effort of living up to it had become too much for him. Was it lack of energy or lack of conviction, I wondered* (DivS: 344)

Thus, though the passage that follows makes clear that Colonel Layton's sense of obligation goes much deeper than that of his wife, the fact is that it cannot survive a crisis. The 'notion' that hits him at this point does so because of his incapacity to visit the village or the family of the havildar from his regiment who had deserted, who is at this very time being driven to suicide by Merrick's questioning. But the point is not so much that Layton is now an ineffectual old man superseded by Merrick and his harshness, but that Layton's own woolly sense of doing good had had no underlying principle that allowed for the establishment of a real relationship. His conviction that '*"he could straighten Havildar Muzzafir Khan out in ten minutes"*' (92) may have been sincere. But there is little doubt that he would have been incapable of appreciating the

probable reasons for desertion. And this incapacity was because he too was in the end more concerned about his own position within the Imperial relationship, even if in terms of his own obligations, rather than about the expectations engendered by that relationship. In a sense he had made his choice when he allowed Mabel to keep it quiet that she was making a donation to the victims of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre rather than to Dyer: '*"I'm keeping it dark for your sake," Mabel told him, but with an edge in her voice that made it sound ad if she felt he had personally driven her to secrecy. "People would misunderstand. They usually do. You have a career to think of."*' (DayS: 61) When he acquiesced in this, even to the extent of keeping Mabel's action a secret from his wife, John Layton had set the seal on what he had perhaps in effect chosen when he opted for the army as a career. So at a time of strain he cannot even live up to what he had thought he upheld.

What might be termed the noticeably ethnocentric attitude of the military to the Imperial relationship is clear from the reflections of Robin White, the Deputy Commissioner at Mayapore, on the brutal quelling of the riots by Brigadier Reid that prompted '*a rather sordid joke going round among Mayapore Indians that if you spelt Reid backwards it came out sounding like Dyer who shot down all those unarmed people in the Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar in 1919*' (TS: 75). White claims that '*my association with Reid was fairly typical of the conflict between the civil and the military*'. Though he later withdraws the generalization his clarification emphasizes what one would in any case have expected from the differences in the stated goals of the two services -

> *The drama Reid and I played out was that of the conflict between Englishmen who liked and admired Indians and believed them capable of self-government, and the Englishmen who disliked or feared or despised them, or, just as bad, were indifferent to them as individuals, thought them extraneous to the business of living and working over there, except in their capacity as servants or soldiersor dots on the landscape. On the whole civil officers were much better informed about Indian affairs than their opposite numbers in the military.* (JC: 315)

Reid's own narrative as presented by Scott forcefully illustrates these negative characteristics.[3] The narrative includes in the first few pages an element that Scott often uses, namely a deficiency with regard to communication at the private level that reflects public inadequacy too. Reid's desire to get away from

his wife and assume his command at Mayapore, rather than share with her the knowledge that she is terminally ill, may seem to spring from reserve. But, as Scott shows clearly when Sarah wishes to speak to her father about the abortion she has had and he firmly rejects her initiative, we can see as underlying such reserve an insensitivity that springs from a fundamental incapacity to share.

The public expression of this is of course much more marked. Though Reid claims to have '*dedicated his life*' to India, it is to India as '*the very cornerstone of the Empire*' and one of his very first acts in Mayapore indicates a basic distrust of Indian soldiers as well as a lack of concern about their comfort

> *Conscious of the problem involved in appearing to make a distinction I nevertheless felt that Johnny Jawan would be less uncomfortable in Banyaganj than was Tommy Atkins. Also, in moving the Berkshires into the Mayapore barracks there was in my mind the belief that their presence in the cantonment might act as an extra deterrent to civil unrest ..... I had, in any case, determined to use British soldiers in the first instance in the event of military aid being required by the civil power.* (JC: 265-6)

This is followed by a bitterly myopic account of Indian aspirations towards independence. Reid declares conclusively that the very limited act of 1935 '*seemed to a man like myself (who had everything to lose and nothing to gain by Indian independence) a Statesman-like, indeed noble concept, one that Britain could have been proud of as a fitting end to a glorious chapter in her imperial history*' (268). White's reflections on the subject that follow are scarcely necessary to make clear the self-interest that motivates what on occasion there is not even at attempt to disguise as paternalism - '*Apart from the strategic necessity of holding India there was of course also the question of her wealth and resources.*' (284)

It is scarcely surprising therefore that, given Reid's belief that any political agitation at this time is simply a dastardly attempt by Indians to take advantage of the difficulties caused by the war, he puts down with excessive force the protests at Mayapore that began over the arrest of Congress leaders after the 'Quit India' resolution and were intensified by reports of the brutal treatment of the suspects in the Bibighar rape case. The concluding sections of his narrative are brilliantly used by Scott to expose the complacence with which he dismisses the particular causes of grievance amongst the Indians at that time.

He is laconic about the '*Number of incidents in which firing was resorted to: 23*' (309). No explanation is deemed necessary for the fact that this figure seems excessive both in terms of the number of such incidents in the country at large, and in terms of the population figures Scott had carefully given us at the beginning of the fourth section of the book. Nor, understandably, is there any expansion deemed necessary of the comparatively low figures for dead and wounded as the 'result of firing' that Reid records officially, even though his previous narrative had already indicated what is made crystal clear in The Towers of Silence that '*a larger than average number of Indians was killed or wounded in Mayapore and Dibrapur... the number of dead in Mayapore, considered uncomfortably high by the authorities, was accounted for chiefly by people drowned in the river when scattering in panic at the sound of rifle fire and the sight of troops on both sides of the Mandir Gate bridge.*' (74-5). Though I think Scott intends us to see here a basic disingenuity, it is also clear that it would be misleading to characterize it as conscious dishonesty. Rather, for Reid the fact that so many lives were lost simply did not matter, for they belonged only to '*dots on the landscape.*'

Far more important to him was the fact that his wife was dying of cancer and his son had been captured by the Japanese. Perhaps equally unsurprisingly those facts weighed heavily too with the chorus of white women whose comments are so sharply depicted in **The Towers of Silence**. That someone suffering from an emotional strain that might be thought relevant when judging his actions should not have the power of life and death over people was not a concept that would have occurred to them with regard to people so demonstrably different. On the contrary, the reason for the strain comes in useful when the authorities who did think the number of dead '*uncomfortably high*' feel obliged to act. No inquiry is held into the incidents, Reid is not reprimanded, and he gets away thinking that his transfer was merely on compassionate grounds on account of his wife's death.

What is, not I think surprising given what I have argued is the basic thrust of Scott's work, but certainly more worthy of comment is the fact that even Robin White did not think Reid's conduct demanded any adverse official criticism. His response to Reid's narrative had indicated fundamental differences in their attitudes. He is forthright in his criticisms of what he describes as '*Reid's jejune account of the 1935 scheme for Federation*' (332), and indeed of Reid's whole analysis of the British response to the movement for independence, including its continuation during the war which had seemed so appalling to Reid - '*what Reid meant by Indians and English sinking differences was the Indians*

doing all the sinking, calling a halt to their political demands and the English maintaining the status quo and sinking nothing' (316). He had recognized both the immorality of and the provocation offered by the arbitrary powers of arrest available under the Defence of India Rules. He had made clear to Reid that if he had as chief civil authority in the district to call in the assistance of the military he could not have thought of it *'"as anything but one of my personal failures"'* (282)[4]. Yet when, from the point of view of these ideals, everything goes wrong and not only, albeit under instructions from his superiors, does he have to order arbitrary arrests but he even has to call in the military, he does not deem it necessary to take any steps in accordance with his theoretical beliefs. Indeed he even goes to the extent of engaging in comradely heroics with the intention of defending Reid -

> *My commissioner asked me to comment on Reid, confidentially... I gave it as my opinion that Reid had at no time exceeded his duty ..... I didn't see why Reid should carry the can back for people who had panicked at provincial headquarters... For a time I expected to be moved myself, but the luck or ill-luck of the game fixed on Reid - unless it were really true that his posting could be put down to the influence of friends of his who thought that following the death of his wife he would be happier if employed in a more active role. It is so easy - particularly when looking for a chosen scapegoat of an action you have taken part in - to hit upon a particular incident as proof that a scapegoat has been found when, in fact, the authorities have simply shrugged their shoulders, and a purely personal consideration has then stepped in and established the expected pattern of offence and punishment.* (328-9)

That last sentence seems to me to sum up the difference between Robin White and someone like Edwina Crane who felt herself impelled to action in fulfilment of her commitment. White saw himself very much as part of a system and, though he could theorize at length, generally in a very melancholy manner, about how and why the system went wrong, he has no personal incentive to rise above it or to make restitution. Thus, though he admires Gandhi's openness and though he has his doubts about the wisdom of arresting the Congress Party leaders, he cannot express those doubts publicly. When he is given instructions to arrest them he cannot but fulfil his instructions. Though he is unwilling to *'make the fullest use of the military'* and though at the time the instructions come through from above he has already seen at the affair on the Mandir Gate

bridge what the military was capable of, he allows Reid to '*have his way about Dibrapur*' because he could not withstand '*the pressure from Reid, the pressure from provincial headquarters, and the pressure of my own doubts*' (328). And after the whole business he is quite content to let it all rest, without either resigning or making some acknowledgment of what in his own words had to be regarded as a personal failure, or else pressing for an inquiry if the responsibility seemed to lie elsewhere.

We can see the same sort of inadequacy in his attitude to the boys arrested with regard to the rape. His primary excuse is that '*the job of suppressing the riots distracted our full attention from the boys suspected of rape*' (330) which is clearly in adequate since it is apparent from Reid's narrative that the troubles had been exacerbated by the treatment of the boys. It was therefore at the very least irresponsible for White to have given his assistant '*the job of conducting the various inquiries*' (313) and to have contented himself with regard to the rumours of ill-treatment with having '*warned Merrick to "stop playing about"*' (330), even though it was clear from what Merrick volunteered to him that there was reason for the rumours that were inflaming the populace[5]. Much more serious was his acquiescence in the ploy to continue keeping the boys in detention under the Defence of India Rules, the existence of which in any case White found reprehensible, when it was clear that a charge of rape would not stick.

White's limitations are made even clearer by the way in which he continues to attempt to justify himself despite the fresh evidence that has been placed before him. He grants that Vidyasagar's deposition was doubtless accurate but minimizes its importance because *Vidyasagar ranks as a self-confessed lawbreaker so that's neither here nor there.*' (329). Though he claims to be '*uncomfortably aware of having failed to investigate the rumours more fully*', he still remains reluctant to admit the enormity of what had happened, even while being able to see the reason for this reluctance - '*I expect my objections to your conclusions are really based on my inner unwillingness to accept the unsupported evidence of Merrick's behaviour - or to admit my own failure to suspect it at the time.*' I think Scott's insistence on this tortuousness where White's own responsibility was concerned, juxtaposed with his widespread liberalism when engaging in historical or theoretical analysis, is designed to make clear not only his inner failure of commitment but also the rather sad defences put up by a man incapable of living up to his own ideals[6].

So, though it is clear to authorities elsewhere, as the account in the other books in the **Quartet** makes clear, that even the original picture of what had happened with regard to the Bibighar suspects was embarrassing, as far as White is concerned Merrick is to be relied upon more than the Indians. Similarly, though it was apparent that excessive force had been used in the quelling of the riots, Reid was a part of the system just as White was and therefore he had to stand by him. Though White was the head of the civil administration in his district, while the system could be blamed for anything that went wrong, there was no need in his conception of his role for him to feel any deep remorse about the part he had played in it.

White of course is not alone in this. We have been introduced before to Knight, the director of the British-Indian Electrical Company who had been to a public school and who got on very well with Hari when he first applied for a job and it turned out that he had been to the same sort of school; but who in the end went along with his Technical Training Manager who was unwilling to deal with an Indian who was not obsequious and spoke with a better accent than he did. Knight was described by the Indian editor of the paper for which Hari later worked as '*a two-faced professional charmer whose liberal inclinations had long ago been suffocated by his mortal fear of the social consequences of sticking his neck out*' (243). And in Hari's own description of the second interview, when he seems to have been looking for signs of subordination, we see the superficiality of any camaraderie Knight might have felt, his inclination to point out that '*this wasn't Chillingborough and that I should start learning how to behave in front of white men.*' (240)

An even more important example of the discrimination almost unavoidable even for those who might originally have thought their liberal inclinations stronger is provided by Hari's old friend at school Colin Lindsey. When he sets off for India he assumes that he will see Hari, but when he gets to Mayapore he does not attempt to get in touch with him. It is in fact conceivable that he deliberately ignores Hari on the occasion after which Hari goes off and gets drunk and thus has his first unfortunate meeting with Merrick; certainly it is clear that Lindsey applies for a transfer as soon as possible so that he might get away from a place where he might have found himself in an embarrassing position. His actual thinking on this point is never made clear, and it is interesting that the narrator of **The Jewel in the Crown**, though he is in touch with Lindsey later and has access to the letters Hari wrote him, never opens up the question

there. What we are meant to understand however is I think made clear by Perron's reflections later on Nigel Rowan's suggestion that Lindsey had been lacking in confidence -

> *Assuming mutual recognition, over-compensation for lack of confidence seems to me a curious way of describing Lindsey's behaviour... if there was mutual recognition, one has to assume that Lindsey saw nothing so clearly as the embarrassment that would follow any attempt to renew an old acquaintance in such very different circumstances... Little to do with over-compensation for lack of confidence, but a lot to do with straightforward self-protection from the consequences of having a friend who was no longer socially acceptable and who might turn out to be a pest, the sort of Indian who as the rai so often said would try to take advantage.* (DivS: 300-1)

The point is that it was just plain callousness that led to such a belittling attitude towards Indians: overriding any obligations to them was the obligation of racial solidarity, and in the preservation of one's relations with one's peers Indians could always be reduced to '*dots on the landscape*'. In the cases of Lindsey and Knight this basic affinity with Reid is clear despite what might have been liberal inclinations; Scott's more important insight is that the same is true even of Robin White. In spite of his theoretical understanding of the situation, in spite of his real affection for certain aspects of India, in the last resort his allegiance was to his position within the rai rather than to the people whose welfare was by his lights the only justification of that position[7].

This aspect is fully developed in the character of Nigel Rowan who is presented I would suggest as the characteristic official representative of British India in **A Division of the Spoils**. His significance may not be easy to grasp because at first glance he seems a hovering spectre rather than a protagonist. Yet this is in itself relevant, in the first place because he can be seen as a sort of balance to Guy Perron, the observer whose attitudes and responses are in line with those Scott clearly intends to evoke in us, more importantly because whereas in a sense Perron is entitled to remain an observer Rowan has an obligation, by virtue of his active involvement in the Imperial situation, to act. His incapacity to do so is, I would suggest, very clearly presented as the hallmark of his inadequacy.

Rowan's first appearance in **The Day of the Scorpion** in connection with the re-examination of Hari Kumar had suggested this, though it takes the revelation

of his reflections and observations on the subject in the last book to make clear the full enormity of the mechanisms within which he functioned[8]. During the examination Rowan tries to keep Hari off the subject of what had happened to him after his arrest by Merrick on suspicion of the rape, and ensures that the most damning evidence as to Merrick's behaviour during the interrogation is kept off the record. It is only because of the insistence of the Indian Civil Servant who accompanies Rowan that Hari is enabled to give the full picture of what had occurred, to make clear the actual reasons for his victimization[9].

For what emerges in **A Division of the Spoils** is the tremendous casuistry that behaviour such as Rowan's could entail. What must I think be described as the concomitant failure in moral principle extends as well to Rowan's superior, the Governor George Malcolm whom we have seen before attempting to entice the former Chief Minister Kasim away from the Congress Party. In Hari's case it is clear to Malcolm as well as to Rowan that the political grounds on which he, and the other boys too, had continued to be detained were remarkably thin. But Hari's aunt's pleas were ignored, and Malcolm only reopens the case at the request of Lady Manners; though she informs him that Daphne had absolved Hari of the rape he thinks it a pity Rowan '*hadn't been able to stick to the political evidence*'. And then, despite what emerged, though he '*could order Kumar's immediate release simply on the basis of the transcript of the examination*', he '*was reluctant to do so without the approval of both the member for Home and Law and the Inspector-General*' (315-6), the former of whom happened to be an Englishman as well. In short, injustice or suffering were less important than the preservation of the facade.

Both Rowan and Malcolm felt that even the truncated record of the examination had to be edited, on the grounds that the Inspector-General would be so shocked by even what remained of Hari's allegations that he would insist on keeping him locked up. It is perhaps to suggest that this was less important than keeping the official British record clean that Scott points out that even with the edited transcript the Inspector-General proved adamant. His excuse now was Kumar's tenuous connection with Pandit Baba, who had once tried to teach him Hindi. Malcolm describes this as a '*"red herring the IG's suddenly noticed"*' (318), and how right this is is apparent from the fact that his objections vanished after Merrick had been injured and decorated. After that Merrick was too exalted for Hari's release to have reflected adversely on the fact that he had arrested him originally, and this was all that mattered, not the farfetched idea

of a connection with Pandit Baba that had been so conveniently trotted out. In a sense, travesty of justice though it was, the Inspector-General's attitude is not surprising, in that Merrick was one of his own men, in a department not generally known for its liberalism. What is appalling is Malcolm's acquiescence in this, his cavalier remark about the 'red herring', '*"So, let it lie"*', even though he had the power to act on his own and had no doubt about an injustice that was crying out for rectification. And equally appalling is Rowan's willingness too to let the matter lie, though he had conducted the examination and been able to note the effect of imprisonment on the Hari Kumar he remembered from school. Neither was willing to stick his neck out for what he knew was right, and I believe Scott intends to emphasize this point when, in undertaking to help Kumar after he is finally released, '*I suppose I was sticking my neck out," Gopal said, "but that is what necks are for."*' (321)

Appropriately enough, Rowan recalls in relating the story to Perron the phase Merrick had used to taunt Hari, '*"What price Chillingborough now?"*' (DayS: 304, DivS: 313)[10]. It is not only that Rowan's loyalties to Merrick or rather the regime he represents go deeper than his loyalties to Hari and to the ideal of trusteeship he might have been thought to exemplify; it is also that Rowan's own career in India makes clear the bitter realities behind what he might have thought he had absorbed at his old school, as suggested in the exchanges between him and Hari at the examination that Lady Manners overheard -

> *"You would call Chillingborough a liberal institution?"*
>
> *"It wasn't a flag-wagging place. It turned out more administrators than it did soldiers."*
>
> *She smiled and wondered if Rowan smiled too to be reminded so unexpectedly of his own words - "I wasn't cast in the mould of a good regimental officer".* (DayS: 271)

Despite this Rowan had joined the army because he had when young shared the view he notes in Sarah when she was discussing her uncle's efforts during the war to persuade Englishmen who had come out to India only because of the war to stay on afterwards. Scott I think uses the passage not only to point out how the very fact of Uncle Arthur's occupation indicated the assumption of the British that they would be staying on for some time in India after the war, but also to show how Rowan's attitude had changed after he came out to India and

he was no longer as idealistic as he had been at school about a swift transition to the Indians -

> *In the course of her argument she used the word Indianisation, which suggested that the one criticism of her uncle's efforts she would accept as valid was that they were not officially directed as thoughtfully as they could have been to that end. In a girl of her type such a view was unusual. It was one he shared. It had lain immature and unformed behind his youthful decision to seek a military and not a civil career in India; a decision he had regretted and sought to remedy before the war by undergoing a probationary period in the Political Department, in the hope of transferring to it permanently.* (DivS: 152)

Thus he is able to tell Lady Manners that he always wanted to serve in the political department, and in thinking of '*applying what talent he had*' in the princely states he is convinced as he tells Bronowsky that '"*There is an obligation to the princes on our part. I should say that it's been made clear often enough that we recognize it.*"' (166) It is characteristic therefore that we find him at the end seeking to prove to the recalcitrant Nawab. of Mirat that he had no alternative except to accede to India. As I have said before, I do not think Scott had any doubt about the desirability of such accession, and in that sense I have little doubt that he thought Rowan's political attitude preferable to that of Rowan's superior, Robert Conway, who was trying to prevent the accession of Gopalakand. Yet while Scott shows sympathetically that Conway was prepared to fight for a principle however misguided, the various references to the different phases Rowan has gone through are I think intended to underline the fact that he was without principles at all, that whatever he was expected to think in the interests of the mechanism within which he functioned became his ideal.

What might be termed this basic unsoundness in Rowan, his ultimate unreliability where commitment was required, is made clear in the sexual sphere, in consonance with the symbolism we see elsewhere in the **Quartet**. Firstly, in **A Division of the Spoils**, there is his interest in Sarah so that is seems clear that when he goes up to Pankot he might very well propose to her; however, he drops the idea when he learns that Merrick is going to marry Susan. Interestingly, just as in the case of Hari, Perron realizes that Rowan '*was trying to set off against his own inertia someone else's positive action: mine. He wanted me to do what he could not do: help Kumar. His ideas on the subject, it goes without, saying, were woolly*' (302). So with regard to Susan's engagement Perron realizes that

Rowan had taken him to dinner at the Laytons because of '*the forthcoming marriage and the part which I might or might not play in frustrating it*' (274). At this point Rowan is the only person available who knows the full depths of Merrick's iniquity, but neither that nor his feelings for Sarah will prompt him to act. Of course he was doubtless able to excuse his passivity on the grounds of professional discretion; but, apart from the fact that he was incapable of exercising any initiative to find any other way of saving the situation, the point is that he was incapable of sufficient commitment to understand that even professional discretion was less important than the well-being of individuals who would otherwise be traduced. It was because of such impotence on the part of characters like Rowan that Merrick was able to flourish; as he had chosen Hari, so he chose the Laytons, and Rowan simply stood by and let it happen.

And to emphasize the point Scott brings in at the end the character of Laura, whom Rowan had once hoped to marry but who abandoned him for someone else. Widowed after the Japanese invasion of Malaya, she returns to India after the war and does marry Rowan; whereupon, in Mirat, Merrick seems to choose her too and visits her and gains her confidence. As it happens however Laura is as Perron puts it tougher, and instead of becoming dependent upon Merrick she becomes disgusted and tries to get away. But at this stage Rowan insists on her staying on in Mirat and, when Merrick dies, insists too on her going to the funeral '*"To remove anything that didn't fit into the picture... Of an Englishman who'd earned respect and admiration from most sections of the community."*' (544) In short, right through to the very end, Rowan needs to preserve appearances, to lend his support as he had always done even to the devil provided he was British. It was because of such complaisance that the ideals Rowan doubtless sincerely thought he believed in could never be fulfilled: the destruction we see throughout the **Quartet** is as much the responsibility of those who might have stopped it because of the vision they had and the authority they exercised as of those who wrought it. It is for this reason that I believe Scott is making a more than usually subtle point on the occasion when Rowan hears about Merrick's injury and his decoration, which will allow face to be saved and, not justice to be done for that is not possible under the circumstances, but belated orders of release -

> *"Imagine the relief with which Captain Rowan will go back to Ranpur and initiate discreet inquiries - with the Governor's approval - into the truth of what he has heard tonight. A citation for bravery and an*

amputated arm. What luck! It wipes the blot from the escutcheon and solves the problem of Mr. Merrick's future civil or military employment. The boys go free, the files are closed, and all is - as they say -as it was before. The one thing the English fear is scandal, I mean private scandal. If Mr. Merrick had ever been asked to account for his actions the outside world would never have heard of it."

"You think he had actions to account for?"

"Undoubtedly... Courage, mon ami," Bronowsky said, "le diable est mort."

Ahmed repeated the words to himself, to translate them. He smiled. "Is he?" he asked.

They waited for Rowan.(DayS: 472-3)

Yet it would not do to end on such a note of indictment, to suggest that for Scott Rowan was as much the devil as the Merrick Barbie Batchelor had identified as such. Though he was clear-sighted about the destruction that was wrought, Scott was concerned too about the opportunity that was lost, the internal failure of what he saw as the great liberal dream[11]. In giving in the first section of **A Division of the Spoils** the cynical views of the economist Purvis on the speed with which India will be given independence because it is now '*"a wasted asset"*' (31), views that Perron will repeat in the course of the book not cynically but with an awareness of the historical irony involved, Scott makes clear the betrayal of the promise for which Edwina Crane had given her life. The tragedy was that, unlike Edwina or Sarah, those in authority were incapable of an unqualified adherence to what so many of them wanted to believe in. And what Scott makes clear, in Perron's reflections on Rowan's diffidence with regard to Hari, was that because of what they withheld the tragedy was also their own -

What worried Rowan was the thought that after all his suspicion of Hari's complicity in the rape was not based so much on the evidence in the file as on the fact that Hari was an Indian and the colour of his skin coloured one's attitude to him, and that in fact it was a relief to exchange his brief, throw off the mask and let Hari condemn himself while he was trying to condemn Merrick.

And I think it was then, with Rowan sitting opposite me, showing not a trace of anxiety (carve him in stone and nothing would have emerged

so clearly as his rigid pro-consular self-assurance, remoteness and dignity) that I understood the comic dilemma of the raj - the dilemma of men who hoped to inspire trust but couldn't even trust themselves. The air around us and in the grounds of the summer residence was soft, pungent with aromatic gums, but melancholy - charged with this self-mistrust and the odour of an unreality which only exile made seem real. I had an almost irrepressible urge to burst out laughing. I fought it because he would have misinterpreted it. But I would have been laughing for him. I suppose that to laugh for people, to see the comic side of their lives when they can't see it for themselves, is a way of expressing affection for them; and even admiration - of a kind- for the lives they try so seriously to lead. (306-7)

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