

INTRODUCTION

When I was an M.Phil student, I opted for commonwealth literature. I did so not because there was nothing left to be studied in English literature, for the study of a single great writer is a life-time work, but because I was, to be honest, almost ignorant about the literature produced in the commonwealth countries. Study of British Literature is a must at college level. One also gets an opportunity to study Indian or American literature during the course of academic study. But what about literatures produced in the countries other than these ? There are really great non-British writers writing in English belonging to different countries. What about them ? Am I not going to study them ? These were the questions that came to my mind and so I made up my mind to justify them and chose A.D. Hope, an Australian poet for the research study. Study of any writer begins from his family, his country, its culture, its people and so many things. It was entirely a new experience for me. After having referred to a book on history of Australia and its literature, I could give access to some works of Hope.

A. D. Hope is one of the few major living Australian poets. He has been labelled as a Classicist, a Romantic, an Intellectual, a Modern and even a Traditional

poet. This versatility of Hope attracted me and so I chose my topic entitled, 'Imagery in the Poetry of A.D.Hope'. During a long life span of nearly fifty years Hope has only two volumes of poetry to his credit from which many poems have been reprinted in later volumes. The number of poems does not even reach the mark of one hundred.

In the present dissertation I have attempted to find out and explain imagery used by Hope in his major poems. Applying the parameter of imagery I have tried to interpret the meaning of those lines where imagery is used.

I have divided the dissertation into four chapters. In the first part of chapter I, I have taken a short survey of Australian poetry which I think, will help to see the present state of Australian poetry and its place among other literatures in the world. In the second part of this chapter I have dealt with the life and works of Hope. It is assumed that the biography of a writer helps to study his works. The preliminary information regarding Hope's birth, education, and professional career will help to understand his personality and will tell us what sort of a man he is. The complete literary output of the poet is given to see when and in how many stages in life Hope produced his works. The chapter also records various comments of critics and poets on the poetry of Hope.

Chapter II deals with the nature and function of imagery. It quotes various views and propositions regarding the nature and function of imagery. The concept of imagery is itself so simple and at the same time so abstract that one fails to state its definite nature. However, the various views, I think, will help to look at various shades of meaning the term bears and one can look at it from different angles. While discussing the kinds of imagery I have also quoted some relevant lines from the poetry of Hope.

In chapter III, I have made a study of almost all major poems of Hope focussing the use of figures of speech mainly simile and metaphor which make up the imagery. Though every poem, as C. Day Lewis says, 'is an image composed from a multiplicity of images, I have quoted only those lines where imagery dominates the scene. I have pointed the images out and explained them in the context. Wherever felt, I have also recorded the outlook and intention of the poet behind using those images.

In chapter IV, I have arrived at the conclusion of the research topic. The chapter records my findings and impressions on the poems studied in chapter III. I have also attempted to study the personality of the poet through the images used. I thought it necessary and relevant to mention the fields from which Hope draws the maximum and minimum numbers of imagery which I have mentioned.

CHAPTER - I

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- 1. A SHORT SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN POETRY**
 - 2. A. D. HOPE : LIFE AND WORKS**

CHAPTER I

1. A SHORT SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN POETRY

Geographically speaking, Australia is located to the south-east part of the world. An independent continent today, Australia like many other countries in the world once suffered from British colonialism. What makes her more lonely and hopeless is that she unlike other colonized countries does not have her own culture and tradition as such. In their origin all the inhabitants of Australia are Europeans. Some lived there and others went to Europe bereaving the land of all her sources of wealth and treasure. Even freedom brought no change in the barren and sterile land. The detachment of the people to the land has resulted in the feeling of loneliness, homesickness, hopelessness etc. All these aspects figure in Australian literature in general and poetry in particular.

Poetry in Australia has shown a constant tendency to be descriptive. This is partly due to the fact that the tradition began under the influence of the Romantic movement. The shade of Wordsworth still haunts Australian Poets. From Harpur and Kendall in the early nineteenth century to Douglas Stewart and Judith Wright at the present day it would be



unfair to say that almost all poems with some exceptions of Hope deal with its scenery. The poets, however, have a wider range than the novelists, and have solved the problem of coming to grips with the country rather better. The best Australian Poetry today gives the impression of poets who start from the local scene as something given, whereas the impression older poetry gave was that of the poets who aimed at the local scene as something to be domesticated in literature. Moreover, in poetry there has always been another tradition than the 'National' one. Brennan, McCrae and Neilson, among the older poets wrote poetry that was simply poetry and did not try to be 'Australian Poetry'. Perhaps the fact that the traditional subjects of poetry are the primary passions of the heart and the universal facts of human life has protected it. Love, for example, is one of the commonest themes of poetry and even the most enthusiastic nationalist might hesitate to maintain that there is a specifically Australian sort of love.

Poetry is in a healthy state in Australia today. After a period of literary disease in the twenties and thirties, when Imagism, surrealism, Apocalypse and other experimental diseases took a temporary hold, the poets have now returned to writing in the main stream of the tradition and 'making it new' in the traditional manner. There are at

least a dozen poets with a high degree of craftsmanship and all have something to say. Among them are Kenneth Slessor, Robert FitzGerald, A.D.Hope, Judith Wright, James McAuley, Rosemary Dobson, Harold Stewart, Vincent Buckley, David Campbell, Nan McDonald, Douglas Stewart and Dorothy Auchterlonie. Though many of them are in one sense or another descriptive poets, the best of them avoid the two crippling obsessions of much previous Australian Poetry : that to look at scenery is in itself to have a poetic experience, and that not to deal with themes specifically Australian is to be derivative, Second-hand or 'academic'. Another advantage which the poets enjoy is that poetry does not pay and is not expected to, so that there is no pressure from the market.

Thus, this short survey of the situation of poetry in Australia today leads to the conclusion that in the first hundred and fifty years Australia has not done brilliantly but neither has she done badly. She is beginning to move out of the period of provincialism and limited nationalism. She has not yet produced poets of the first rank. But if the poets encouraged to use their powers and talents then surely in the near future she will produce poets of International reputation and fame.

2. A.D.HOPE : LIFE AND WORKS

Alec Derwant Hope is the leading Australian Poet in English today. Born in 1907 at Cooma, New South Wales in Australia, he was educated at Bathurst High School and Fort Street High School, Sydney and at the Universities of Sydney and Oxford. Later, he became a teacher and vocational psychologist. He also lectured in English at Sydney Teachers' College and Melbourne University. He was then appointed professor of English at the Australian National University, Canberra where he was later appointed Emeritus Professor and Library Fellow. Besides these brilliant and scholarly academic achievements Hope was honoured with the 'Commonwealth Poetry Prize' for his outstanding contribution to Australian poetry.

To begin with, Hope once said that he began writing poetry at a very early age long back in 1930s. He was then writing poems in magazines and anthologies and was circulating in manuscript. Soon he became wellknown to the readers of Australian literary journals and began to be admired by all. The post-war generation found him significant and exciting because he broke new grounds. He, alongwith Harold Stewart and James McAuley was labelled 'the counter-revolution' in Australian poetry by J.D.Pringle.¹ However, it

was only with the publication of his first collection of poetry entitled, The Wandering Islands² in 1955 that he was widely hailed as a powerful and learned poet writing in English. This book was followed by his second collection of poetry entitled Poems³ published in 1960. Almost all poetry of Hope appeared in these two books. Compared to several volumes of poetry of R.D.FitzGerald or Judith Wright, his near contemporaries, Hope's output appears scanty and marginal. However, it is his highly learned poetry that drew attention of the contemporary English and American poets. Of the two books published, the first is now difficult to find, but the second reprints all but fourteen of the forty two poems published in the first book. With the addition of barely twenty more poems. However, the curious thing is that to read either book is to be immediately aware of a commanding poetic presence. Besides these two volumes Hope has published some more collections of poetry namely, New Poems (1969), Collected Poems (1972). Selected Poems (1973) and A Late Picking Poems (1975). He is also a good critic. He has written some books of criticism which are of great significance and value. They include The Cave and the Spring, Essays on Poetry (1965), Native Companions, Essays and comments on Australian Literature (1966), and The New Cratylus, Essays on Poetry (1979).

This is all what Hope has produced during his long span of nearly fifty years. Yet, it is the quality rather than the quantity of his works which matters much and make him a great poet and critic. He writes only when he is sure of his power of writing. His works are the outcome of a deep meditation on subjects and matters of great significance.

It is interesting to see that Hope was born in the same year as W.H. Auden, a poet to whom he bears some resemblance. Both have well-stocked, inquiring minds, both are satirist who delight in disappointing the expectations of readers, both profess an eighteenth century common sense and appreciation of absurdity, and both are highly competent with occasional poems. All these and some other aspects are seen in Hope's earliest published poems. The aspect of male-loneliness, women as goddesses, sex objects or works of art is conveyed in 'The End of a Journey', 'The Damnation of Byron' and 'The Massacre of the Innocents'. The question of amplification for human solitude is taken up in 'The Wandering Islands' whereas Love and domesticity exist in 'The Death of the Bird'. 'Imperial Adam' expresses Hope's doubtful nature about domesticity and his sense of power of womanhood. His cultural attitudes are expressed in poems such as, 'Standardization', 'Australia', and 'The Return from the Freudian Islands'. They mock the popular romantic craze of

individuality by reference to the standardization and mass production of nature.

Hope's satires are often expressed in ballad quatrains, a form that he returned to late in life. Often they are comic, though sexual fierceness and horror make them less light-hearted. His 'Conquistador' is a surrealistic comedy of deflated sexual fantasy.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Hope began to write a set of complex meditative poems, somewhat in the style of Keats's odes. They are full of arcane reference and ingenious thought. Mostly, they are focussed on a book, an incident or a painting. Sometimes mythological, sometimes scientific. This set of poems include 'Soledades of the Sun and the Moon', 'The Double-Looking Glass', 'Moschus Moschieferus', and 'On an Engraving By Casserius'. Many of them concern the vision and task of the poet frequently conceived of in contrastive terms. The long dramatic poem, 'Vivaldi, Bird and Angel' focusses Hope's common images of earthly music, celestial music and love on the dramatic scene of Vivaldi's rehearsal and direction of his 'bird concerto'.

The poems of 1960s often have a substantial length, which is sometimes uncontrolled by narrative movement of thought or poetic shape.



A Late Picking poems (1975) contains a number of garrulous poems. Some of them are surrealistic together with a few indications as in 'Hay Fever' where Hope seems to be moving away from his rigid versification turning comic in tone. Hope is a poet who happens to have been born in Australia and writes in English for the most part on themes which transcend nationality. To read the best of these poems - no more than a handful is a rewarding experience because they communicate a defined awareness of modernity and the best examples are, 'The Wandering Islands', 'The Explorers', 'Standardization', and 'The Death of the Bird'. They show that Hope is a modern poet.

In a perceptive appreciation of Hope's volume of poetry, 'The Wandering Islands', S.L. Goldberg commented on the book's three-fold structure. He pointed out that the poems with which each section begins are directly concerned with art or the artist, thereby constituting as it were the overtures in which announced themes to be subsequently developed.⁴ Although the arrangement of the poems in Hope's later collection, 'Poems' is quite different, it is true to say that next to human isolation the poet is pre-occupied with the workings of the creative imagination and the relationship between the creator and the thing created. While recognising man's plight to be desperate, in poem after poem

Hope affirms his faith in the regenerative power of art. Though at his earlier stage of writing he was called a polished Georgian or post-Eliot modernist his collected poems however show remarkable formal control and a range of intellectual and especially literary influence and reference unparalleled in the work of any other Australian poet. This and a certain affinity for satire, have led some critics to speak of him as an intellectual poet who looks back to the eighteenth century, to the Age of Reason. For Hope, the poet's imaginative pursuit is indescribable, and its nature can only be lamely suggested in analogical terms. He is an 'intellectual' poet only in a special and limited sense. Much of his best poetry is made out of experiences of frustrated or unfulfilled love, destructive passion, the inner conflicts of a divided will, and a strong sense of isolation, loss and guilt. Characteristically, the pains and ecstasies of existence are mediated through tale, legend, myth or allusion as in 'The End of a Journey', 'Imperial Adam', 'Pyramis', 'Circe' and some other. It is thus, the manner rather than substance that earns Hope the title of traditionalist.

Hope's poetry is satiric, erotic, mythological and learned. Once it seemed the apogee of Australian poetry. Its scepticism about easy solutions; its sinewy dialectics, its

robust treatment of sex, and its deft versification raised Hope above his contemporary poets. More recently, his mind has been accused of being well-stocked but trivial; his attitude to women has been condemned as suggestive of a smoke filled clubroom and his attitudes to verse form have come to seem stubbornly antiquated. Some of these criticisms, however, are oversolemn, they fail to take account of Hope's mischievous satire, his delight in misleading the reader, and the modesty and confessions of ignorance in many poems. They mistake the doctrinaire and bitter prose writer for the much learned poet.

Modern Australian literature would be poorer without Hope's satires. It is for his craftsmanship and the integrity of his vision in his lyric poetry that he can claim to rank among the foremost of modern Australian poets. He writes with intelligence and passion of the themes with which mankind is most preoccupied - Creation, Love and Death. In one of his essays Hope says, 'A man obsessed with a passion for a summarized view of the world can not write poems without reflecting his ruling passion.'⁵ And Hope is a poet with such a vision and even his slightest poems reflect his ruling passion. His dozen or more poems make it sure that he is among the best poets writing in English today.

REFERENCES

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