

Chapter VIConclusions

I

Our study of the three major novels, two of which were written before the thesis of The Two Cultures was clearly formulated, and the third soon after the thesis was presented in terms of ^{the} Rede Lecture, disproves Jerome Thale's view that "it is clear that they [non-fiction writings] are not of a piece with the novels."¹ Our study proves that there is an intimate relationship between The Two Cultures and these novels. The thesis of The Two Cultures is, of course, an abstraction which consists of certain generalities, the knowledge of which helps us to understand the characters and character groupings in the above-mentioned three novels. In an interview, C.P.Snow is supposed to have said that "the novels and the non-fiction are not similar so much as complementary."² The truth lies between what Thale says about the non-connection of the thesis to the novels and what Snow says about the novels being complementary to the thesis: The truth is that his early writings do point to the formulation of the thesis, and his later writings do evince a critical attitude towards it. What is important to note is that C.P.Snow, who represents, in a sense, the synthesis of the two

cultures, speaks of the possibility of ^ahiatus between the two cultures but he is aware at the same time that the gap is not too wide to be bridged. What he suggests in The Two Cultures is that we should evolve a programme of education which combines the positive values of both the cultures. The novels do prove the necessity of such a blending of values. Martin Eliot of The New Men is a moralistic scientist, a scientist with ^aconscience about the nuclear bomb; he even resigns from a lucrative and prestigious position as the scientist number two in the Barford establishment and willingly dwindles into the area of pure science, merely as a Fellow of a Cambridge College. But . . . by the time we come to the period of The Affair, that is, by the time he is ^{in his} forties, Martin is a changed man: he has changed into a man of the world, more like his brother Lewis Eliot, who is a representative of the literary humanist culture. Probably what Snow says about the two cultures is true when the citizens of The Two Cultures are young, immersed in their own worlds, but as they grow older they inevitably get involved in the socio-political process and lose their youthful angularities.

Our study of two or three groups - the groups are mentioned in The Two Cultures, those of scientists,

engineers and literary intellectuals - indicates that Snow creates characters belonging to these groups as real human beings rather than allegorical figures. There are few people from these groups who mechanically embody the characters that Snow speaks with regard to the above-mentioned groups. But it is also true that without the set of generalization that are presented in The Two Cultures it would have been difficult to understand them fully from the inside. In this sense the novels are complementary to the thesis, or better still, the thesis is complementary to the novel. The novels explore the complexities and contradictions of human life with reference to characters of all these groups, without simplifying them by being too conscious of the thesis.

Graham Martin complains that Snow's novels "are very thin in their physical and emotional life."³ This is very true. The reason for this is that all the novels are presented through the consciousness of the literary intellectual Lewis Eliot, who is an academic lawyer. Secondly, Snow deliberately avoids the physical and emotional life because he wants to focus his attention on the socio-cultural problems of western society. Bernard Bergonzi considers that Snow's novels are a social history and he attributes the

aridness of the novels to the fact that it is Lewis Eliot who tells the story ^{as} with a first person narrator. Bergonzi thinks that "Lewis Eliot's presence is too artificial and his moral assumptions are distinctly shallow."⁴ This just means that Bergonzi is looking for a different kind of novel in Snow's works.

The New Men has a very strong ethical problem at the centre of the novel and the two cultures are examined in relation to the modern problem regarding the manufacturing of the nuclear bomb. What the novel shows is that there are various kinds of scientists and various kinds of literary humanists. Only Martin Eliot behaves like the young scientist of The Two Cultures. In The Affair the distinction between the scientists and the literary humanists is blurred, but our reading of The Two Cultures helps us in locating certain ideas and attitudes that go with each pole of western culture. Thale says, rightly, that "Snow's novels stand for certain attitudes and ideas and those ideas are too important to be regarded simply as part of a self and closed fictional world."⁵ His attitude in The Affair appears to be somewhat complacent about the state of affairs regarding western culture. The intensity of feeling that we find in The New Men has disappeared in The Affair, but The

Affair is far more mature than the earlier novels, primarily because of the subtle and wise consciousness, critical and sympathetic, at the same time, some critics mistake wisdom for complacency.

II

The Masters gives a clear indication of Snow's evolving conception of the two cultures in western civilization, though a faint adumbrations of the conception are to be found even in his early exercises in fiction; New Lives for Old (1933) and The Search (1934) both of which are the stories about scientists and their conflicts. The academic world of The Masters offers Snow a dynamic opportunity for exploring the interactions between members of both the cultures - the scientific culture and the literary culture. Although the main theme of The Masters is the exploration of power structure in a group, this exploration is done in terms of the interaction between scientists, young and old, and non-scientists, also young and old. The question of incomprehension between scientists and non-scientists, particularly with young scientists and others, is very subtly explored in this novel. Snow makes a distinction between the older scientists and and younger ones, the latter being

radical in their views, Leftist in politics, more concerned with the future than the past. They are all individualists, either radical or liberal, and straight-forward in their ethical attitudes. The members of the literary humanist culture are more or less political, manipulating human relations from the point of view of both enlightened selfishness and the interest of the college. From the point of view of the novel, the members of the literary culture add colour and drama with their unexpected changes in thinking and behaviour. Again, it is interesting to see that a frustrated scientist plays the role of a villain, creating a lot of mess among human relationships. The interaction between scientists and non-scientists ultimately appears to make one culture with two poles rather than two separate cultures. The conception based on certain generalizations^{is} made with a view to highlighting certain distinctions between the scientific culture and the literary culture. One thing that comes out very clearly is that the scientists are interested in the future of^{an} institution and mankind; the literary humanists are involved in the past traditions and present status in a conservative manner.

The next novel, The New Men, reflects very clearly the crystallization of his thesis about two cultures. In fact, the reading of The Two Cultures throws a good deal of light on Martin Eliot, the young scientist who is involved in the making of a nuclear bomb. The moral conflict that he undergoes makes him a hero, and it is he who comes off as a scientist with ^a conscience, whereas it is the literary humanists with double standards ^{who} are complacent about the explosion of the bomb. The novel also reflects the difference between pure scientists and applied scientists which The Two Cultures speaks of. The applied scientists, engineers, are generally men of the world and they tend to be conservative, though they know the organizational aspect of technology far better than the scientists. Though Martin gives up a prestigious post at Barford and turns to pure science for his academic and spiritual fulfilment, he echoes what Snow says in The Two Cultures about the distinction between the individual life and social life. He holds ^{that} individual life may be tragic but it is not necessary for social life to be tragic, because the defects in social life can be remedied with the help of science and technology. Martin moves from moral neutrality of a young scientist

to realization that there is a moral dimension to all scientific discoveries and inventions, and particularly to the application of science in terms of technology. The novel is ultimately about the slow and steady development of Martin's moral consciousness. Even the best of literary humanists Lewis Eliot, Martin's brother fades into insignificance before Martin's assertive adulthood. But because we see the entire action through the subtle and perceptive vision of a literary humanist, Lewis Eliot, the novel gets its significant dramatic dimension.

The Affair re-examines the two poles of western culture and comes to the conclusion that it is possible to bridge the gap between them. In fact, the scientists as they grow older become more like a literary humanist and consequently men of the world. An academic crisis brings Martin and Lewis together and they discover that if they join hands they can do something positive and creative by way of mending social life. What is important to notice in The Affair is that the scientists as they are growing old move towards the pole of literary culture, but men who belong to literary culture do not move towards the scientific culture. This one way movement symbolising Snow's own life pattern appears to be the only way

of bridging the gap between the two cultures. An exploration of the opposite movement, that is, movement from literary humanist culture to scientific culture is also an area to be explored, but that appears to be beyond Snow's personal range as a novelist. With his powerful central concern with the structure of power in society, Snow is essentially more interested in the traditional affairs of men and matters than with the radical transformation of society with the help of science and technology. It is this attitude of Snow's which makes him look more like ^a ~~the~~ complacent reactionary than a man interested in the possibility of future being radically transformed through science and technology. Unfortunately, though The Affair is one of the maturest novels in the sequence, subtle and insightful in its psychological probing into the minds of the people belonging to the cream of western civilization, it has, at its heart, a stoical vision of the general decline in civilization. Malcolm Bradbury puts his finger on Snow's 'bleak landscape' which has, at its heart, a kind of literary despair that Snow attributes to the modernness whom he apparently dislikes. Bradbury points out that "The liberal reasonableness represented by the author and his fictional surrogate, Lewis Eliot,"



cannot really, "cope with the bulk of human experience"⁶ Bradbury tries to come to terms with this particular disturbing weakness of Snow - Lewis Eliot, who lends a kind of ordinariness to the entire sequence. "Yet ~~is~~ the novelist of ordinariness," Bradbury says, "when he has power, has an important place in the culture. The power is likely to reside in the presence of a genuine and a moral intelligence, an intelligence that ends up not only with its own weaknesses, but by seeing its own weaknesses."⁷ Bradbury justifies Lewis Eliot's vision as a very human one and says that Lewis Eliot "has implicated modern history so that his life is in a very real sense a worldly life."⁸ The three novels together have an open structure, which is the structure of the entire sequence, and hence the impression of life is mentioned throughout these three novels. He has *maintained?* moved towards a thesis and criticised it by confronting it with the complexities and contradictions of human life. He proves that novelistic thinking is multi-dimensional and immensely superior to the linear, logical thinking that we find in a thesis. The Two Cultures is a programme for reform in education and it was presented in terms of over-simplification and over-generalization, whereas the novels present the human implications of the thesis by presenting the

criss-cross of interactions between scientists and non-scientists, between scientists and engineers and interactions within each group of these people primarily as individual human beings. The thesis is hopeful about transforming the social life of mankind in terms of science and technology though the existential point of view ~~is~~ mentioned in The Two Cultures about the life of every man being tragic and about the essential loneliness of man, appears as a mere statement, ~~but~~ the novels enshrine this existential point of view from The New Men onwards, and The Affair is essentially governed by it. And that is why we feel that there is a movement from hope to desperation, from a possibility of glory to the certainty of decline. Hence the novels, instead of becoming a mechanical embodiment of the thesis, have become a moving human document.

Notes and References

1. Thale. p.87.
2. Ibid., p.87.
3. Ibid., look at p.107, ref.No.11, Modern Age
Pelican Guide p.412.
4. Ibid p.100, see p.107 for details about refrence.
5. Ibid. p.103.
6. Bradbury, Malcolm. Possibilities: Essays on
the State of the Novel. London: OUP
1973. p.201.
7. Ibid. p.202.
8. Ibid., p.202.