Chapter-II

Perspectives

(with a study of Two Cultures)

I

In order to have a proper perspective on the topic of our research, it is good to start with a brief account of C.P.Snow's life and works.

Charles Percy Snow (1905-1980) was the second of four sons, in a lower-middle class family living in Leicester. His father was a clerk in a shoe factory and not very successful. The prospering city and the unprospering life of his father made a tremendous effect on the intelligent boy. This is very touchingly described in one of his novels, Time of Hope (1949).

Snow joined Alderman Newton's Grammar School and specialised in science but later broke through from this career and became a novelist. At school he was an indifferent student. After specialising in science he became a laboratory assistant in the school. At the same time he was working for a university scholarship. He won the scholarship that took him a Leicester University College and also earned for him a First Class Honours in Chemistry in 1927. This success also

awarded him a stay on and do research. He took an M.Sc. in Physics in 1928 and was awarded a scholarship to go to Cambridge. Here he became a research student and in 1930 he received his Ph.D. and was elected a Fellow of Christ College, Cambridge.

The quality of his research became a subject of talk of all scientists and there was hope that he might find a permanent place in a university. When his career as a scientist was nearly settled he felt that his real career lay elsewhere and started breaking through to become a writer. Snow himself makes it clear:

> I was educated as a Scientist as Miles was (The Search), but I never had his single-minded passion, and in fact knew my own ultimate vocation from the time I was eighteen.[1]

During this period, when he was wondering whether he should be a scientist or a novelist, Snow also wrote and published a good number of papers on science for a general audience. Most of these papers were published in The Spectator.

In 1939 Snow was appointed to Royal Society

BARR. BALASAHEB KHARDEKAR LIBRARY
SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR

Committee in the war context. From this moment onwards Snow began his yet another career as a civil servant for about twenty years. His main job was that of a scientific personnel officer: how to make the best use of individual scientists for war, for industry, for research, and in government establishments. For his useful and devoted service he was made a C.B.E. in 1943 and knighted in 1957.[2] He also became a member of Board of Directors of the English Electric Company in 1947.

Snow remained a bachelor until 1950, and married the novelist of repute called Pamela Hansford Johnson, and a son was born to them in 1952.

After the war Snow was appointed as a Civil Service Commissioner. Now he found ample time to resume his 'ultimate vocation' of writing novels as he had accepted only a part-time job. The novels he wrote are popularly known as Strangers and Brothers, a sequence of eleven novels. The period of writing of these novels was 1947 to 1970.

Snow travelled widely both in America and the Soviet Union as a notable participant in symposia and received many honours. About his fame Jerome

Thale writes: "with fame Snow has not become a personality but something like an institution, a pantocratic sage."[3] The term 'sage' which was used for describing Snow has been bitterly criticised by F.R.Leavis, who writes that "Snow can hardly plan or foresee lives. But what finally calls for emphasis is the poverty of Snow's own ostensible range of satisfaction."[4] The whole Richmond Lecture of Leavis denies both intellect and genius to Snow. Leavis does not consider Snow as a novelist nor as a thinker. For he, as Leavis puts it, lacks both. R.G.Davis describes Leavis's statements as 'a savage personal attack on Snow.'[5]

Snow's first novel is Death under the Sail (1932), a detective story. He wrote it when he was twenty six without any particular intention or consciousness. The story is told by a narrator who is also a character in the novel. The book is singled out for one reason from the genre of detective stories. The remarkable quality of the book is, as Cooper says, 'that the plot grows out of characters rather than the characters out of the plot'[6]

New Lives for Old (1933) is his second novel,

written in the style of H.G.Wells. The plot is the discovery of a hormone, which brings people in their sixties back to where they were in their thirties. The story covers the period of thirty years, beginning with 1950. The book deals with the moral and economic deterioration of the western world[7] as caused by the discovery. Snow describes his second novel as 'a very bad book',[8] but the book contains ideas which he developed in his later works.

The Search (1934) is his third novel. The book is to some extent autobiographical. It is the story of Arthur Miles, a young scientist, told in the first-person. It covers the period of Miles from boyhood to maturity. Miles, like Snow, comes from a lower-middle class, wins scholarship and becomes a scientist. The book has in it some ideas which were later developed in The Two Cultures. The Search also seems to deal with a conflict between science and love. Jerome Thale describes it as 'a conventional realistic novel with a number of limitations, such as indistinct themes, weak characters and lack of dramatic quality'![9] He tries to do well here as compared to his earlier novels.

Snow's 'ultimate vocation' was realised in his sequence of novels entitled Strangers and Brothers. It is a sequence of eleven novels written between 1947 to 1970. Snow had the idea of writing this kind of novel as early as 1st January, 1935, in Marseilles, when he was walking the Canebiere. The sequence of novels that Snow wrote is described by Anthony Burgess as 'roman-fleue,' the novel as a river.[10] Burgess explains that whenever a novelist wants to say about man and his problems, he writes a sequence of books. It is a single big book, each independent in itself, with the novel flowing on.

In the 20th century two English novelists wrote this kind of novels under the influence of the French master, Marcel Proust. These two novelists were Anthony Powell and C.P.Snow.

It is possible to make a comparative study of Powell's The Music of Time and C.P.Snow's Strangers and Brothers. This sequence of eleven novels is divided into two groups; one, novels of 'direct experience,' and two, novels of 'observed experience,' In the novels of direct experience the hero is Lewis Eliot whereas in the other novels Lewis Eliot is only an observer. In the second group of novels a group of characters or society is the focus of observation, not

any one individual. Of the eleven novels three are novels of direct experience: (1) Time of hope, (1949), (2) Homecomings (1956), (3) Last Things (1970), The novels of observed experience are: (1) George Passant (1940), (2) The Conscience of the Rich (1958), (3) The Light and the Dark (1947), (4) The Masters (1951), (5) The New Men (1954), (6) The Affair (1960), (7) Corridors of Power (1964), (8) The Sleep of Reason ((1968). Of these The Masters and The New Men jointly won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize of 1954.

All the eleven novels tell the story of Lewis Eliot in the cyclical style. Regarding the name of Lewis Eliot R.G.Davis writes:

> "But why is he named Lewis Eliot? Snow, as we shall see, takes names seriously and plays on them freely. His spokesman's name links those two of the villains mentioned most conspicuously in The Two Cultures: Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot."[11]

Although the sequence has the cyclical design, each novel is an idependent one. Each novel has its own plot and action but the characters appear and disappear according to their need in the context. Most of the characters are common throughout. The sequence is the life story of Lewis Eliot.

About the sequence there are many and varied opinions. I shall give but only two important ones; one, by William Cooper, an authority on and a friend of Snow, and the other by Jerome Thale, an equally competent authority. According to Cooper,

> "Strangers and Brothers is based on the concept that the moment of time is indissoluble, a part of the past and of the future; it can be taken on its own, complete as it is in itself; but only when it is shown to have embedded in it signs of what has gone before, and what is to come, does it signify full."[12]

And Jerome Thale's opinion is:

> "Though Snow doesn't claim to present a portrait of an age the scope of the novel gives us something like a picture of professional and intellectual class in England from the nineteen twenties through nineteen fiftees. In part, Snow's portrait gives the timeless conditions of professional life - ... and then the Cold War and its social and intellectual by-products..."[13]

Thale continues that 'The strangers and Brothers series gives us a sense of moral and psychological

temper of the "new men",...' and, 'In the realm of personal relations the world of Strangers and Brothers is one in which traditional relationships of family and family connections and of class seem relatively unimportant. ... In the place of the traditional relationships there is a great intensification of self achieved relationships - of friendship, love - and Snow scrutinises them in great detail. ...'[14]

Among the other works of Snow are several papers and lectures that he contributed to various magazines and periodicals. These non-fiction writings are contributions to the examination of practical problems. The Two Cultures (1959) was delivered as a Rede Lecture at Cambridge. Throughout his career as a novelist he also published literary articles like "Challenge to the Intellect" (1958), "The English Realistic Novel" (1957). Scientific articles that he contributed are many. Some of them are; "Enjoyment of Science" (1936), "What we Need from Applied Science" (1936), "Controlling Reproduction" (1937) etc.

Snow had a brief career as a dramatist. After his marriage with Pamela Hansford Johnson, he wrote six one-act plays in collaboration with her. He also

wrote one full-length play called A View Over The Park (produced in 1950); however, it was not a successful play. His Variety of Men (1967) is one of his most admired books dealing with the world-famous personalities, which included people like Churchill, Hitler, Rutherford and Lloyd George.

The Malcontents (1972) is Snow's last novel, unconnected with the above-mentioned sequence of novels. The Time Literary Supplement comments that 'The Malcontent is about the youth and society', and that 'it is like the twelfth volume of the series of Lewis Eliot'.[15]

Of all his non-fiction writings The Two Cultures was the most controversial piece which I shall now take up for discussion.

II

The Two Cultures (1959)

(The Rede Lecture)

This lecture is divided into four sections: (1) The Two Cultures (pp.1-21); (2) Intellectuals as Natural Luddites (pp.22-28); (3) The Scientific Revolution (pp.29-40); (4) The Rich and the Poor (pp.41-51).

Four years later, that is in 1963, Snow added another part to the lecture and called it The Two Cultures: A Second Look which consists of forty six pages, divided into eight small sections without any titles.

The main theme of the lecture is to explore the nature of 'the cultural divide',[16] which is 'not just an English phenomenon', but exists 'all over the western world', though, of course, 'it probably seems the sharpest in England.'[17] The separation between the two cultures, the scientific culture and the literary culture, was noticed more than sixty years ago, but the separation between the scientists and non-scientists is 'much less bridgeable among the young than it was even thirty years ago'.[18] As an insider to both the cultures, Snow asserts that the two groups have almost ceased to communicate with one another and that 'the intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups.'[19] At one pole we have the literary intellectuals and on the other scientists. 'Between the two', he says, 'a gulf of mutual incomprehension - sometimes (particularly among the young) hostility and dislike, but most of all lack of understanding.'[20]

Snow, then, gives a perceptive analysis of what

one group thinks of the other and how 'they have a curious distorted image of each other.'[21] For instance, non-scientists tend to think of scientists 'as brash and boastful, as shallowly optimistic.'[22] The scientists, on the other hand, believe that 'the literary intellectuals are totally lacking in foresight, peculiarly unconcerned with their brother men.'[23]

Snow now focuses on the pole of scientific culture and tries to identify certain attitudes, standards and patterns of behaviour, and certain approaches and assumptions which are common to the members of the scientific culture. He thinks that, statistically, more scientists are unbelievers in religious terms than the members of the literary culture; again, statistically, slightly more scientists are on the Left in open politics. Thirdly, more scientists come from poor families than the rest of the intellectual world. Fourthly, the scientists have 'the future in their bones', whereas the traditional culture 'responds by wishing that future did not exist'.[24] Fifthly, the scientists, Snow says, 'form their own judgements of the moral life, because there is a moral component right in the grain of science itself.'[25]

Apparently Snow is very critical of the other pole - the pole of traditional culture. Members of this culture, Snow feels, like to pretend that the traditional culture is the whole of culture; they are ignorant of the wonderful edifice of science.

The second section is devoted to the fuller analysis of literary intellectuals, whom he calls 'Natural Luddites'.[26] Snow accuses that the western literary intellectuals did not welcome the industrial scientific revolution in England. In the 19th century, ironically, the industrial revolution brought in tremendous prosperity the traditional culture withdrew from it. The literary intellectuals like Ruskin and William Morris, Thoreau and Emerson and Lawrence expressed their reaction to the industrial scientific revolution by emitting 'screams of horror.'[27] They were not aware of the 'prospects of life that were opening out for the poor'.[28] According to Snow, 'industrialisation is the only hope of the poor'. 'Health, food, education; nothing but the industrial revolution could have spread them right down to the very poor.'[29] Industrial revolution brought about a great change in society and this change, Snow says, 'crept on us unawares untouched by academies, hated by Luddites, practical Luddites and intellectual ones.'[30]

In section three Snow speaks of the scientific revolution brought about by electronics, atomic energy automation, which have transformed the world in a radical manner. Here Snow speaks of the gap between pure scientists and applied scientists or engineers. Pure scientists Snow says, have been devastatingly ignorant of productive industry, whereas engineers who live their life in an organised community are closely associated with the productive organisation. Snow says that pure scientists are, statistically left of centre in politics, whereas engineers are conservative almost to a man. 'They are absorbed in making things, and the present social order is good enough for them.'[31] Pure scientists, according to Snow, do not show much understanding or display much sense of social fact. Snow now asks the question, 'Why aren't we coping with the industrial revolution?' His answer is that something has seriously gone wrong with our education system. He is critical of the British system which introduces specialization at an early age. He commends, on the other hand, the American strategy which gives a loose and general kind of education to all the high school students up to the age of eighteen. He also commends the Russian High school education which is much less specialised than the British and much more arduous

than the American. Snow is very critical of the present British system of education and suggests certain productive measures on the lines of American and Russian strategies.

If the British educational system does not adopt itself to the high-tech age, Snow warns that we will have to watch a steep decline of culture in our own life time.

In the last section he says that the rich and industrialised countries should take up the work of industrialising the poorer countries in the world, since the gap between the rich and the poor on an international scale will certainly end up in a holocaust. He warns that "If we are short-sighted, inept, incapable either of good-will or enlightened self interest the gap between the rich countries and the poor may be removed with the accompaniment of war and starvation".[32] The need of the hour is to have trained scientists and engineers who are adaptable enough to a foreign country's industrialisation for at least ten years out of their life.

Part II of the book, The Two Cultures; A Second Look

is an attempt to answer some of the questions raised during the controversy that his Rede Lecture provoked and also extend his thesis a little further. He accepts the view that his ideas are not original at all but he takes credit for presenting the ideas "waiting in the air, in terms of a concrete thesis." He also suggests that his thesis has something significant in it because people all over the world responded to it, which means it is relevant to the present world situation.

In the second section he takes up the objection regarding the simplicity of the lecture. He says that he has made his statements as simple as he could because 'any statements which have any reference to action must be simple.'[33]

In the third section he takes up the objection regarding the word 'culture' or 'cultures' and to the number two. These objections he answers with a great show of erudition (two meanings of 'culture,' the problem of definition etc.) and with good deal of wisdom. He says that his main intention was to focus attention on the widening gap between scientists and non-scientists on the one hand and between the pure and applied science on the other. He then asserts the phrase two cultures is appropriate for the culture he

has in mind. He says he is aware of a third culture coming up but, he says, it is too early to speak of it. The point that he expatiates is that of the relationship between scientific revolution and our literature. He agrees that this is a topic which he mentioned in the lecture but about which everything remains to be said.[34]

In Section Seven Snow comes down very heavily upon modernist writers - writers like Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Joyce, Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Windham Lewis, Kafka, Faulkner, Beckett and others who have not come to terms with the scientific revolution. In this connection he refers to the controversy between Lukacs and Trilling with regard to modernism, the former being anti, the latter being pro.

In the last section he speaks about himself and how inspite of his thesis he has written more novels on politics, on the conflict between power groups than on other themes. He concludes by saying that 'it is dangerous to have two cultures which can't or don't communicate.[35]

He is now aware, he says, that changes in education are not going to produce miracles but we

can, with the help of applied science, reduce the remediable suffering of most of our fellow humans.[36]

The Times Literary Supplement was one of the first journals to respond to The Two Cultures. The point that the TLS critic makes is that 'a gap in itself is not ununderstandable. Without a gap the electric spark would not pass, and our arch-lamps would not give light or our motor cars run.'[37] A small gap between the two cultures, he argues, is healthy and creative. 'The trouble about the gap at the present time is that it has widened to the extent of total mutual incomprehension. No spark can pass. The TLS critic appreciates the ring-side view that Snow gives of the two cultures and commends the educational reforms that Snow has suggested. He thinks that there are one or two bridges between the two cultures - music and possibly religion! In contrast to the TLS critic, F.R.Leavis, in his Richmond Lecture dilivered in the hall of Downing College on February 28, 1962, comes down very heavily upon Snow both as a writer and a thinker. He says: "Snow's relation to the age is of a different kind, it is characterised not by insight and spiritual energy,

but by blindness, unconsciousness and automatism. He doesn't know what he means, and doesn't know he doesn't know."[38] In his totally drastic and dismissive comment on C.P.Snow he says that 'The Two Cultures exhibits an utter lack of intellectual distinction and an embarrassing vulgarity of style'.[39] He further says that Snow's use of the term culture betrays 'nothing but intellectual nullity'. He gives less value to Snow's essay than to a pupil's essay. Leavis strongly objects to Snow's use of 'The Literary Culture,' which, he says, Snow identifies with the 'literary intellectual.' Snow's "Literary Culture' is," Leavis says, "something that those genuinely interested in literature can only regard with contempt and resolute hostility. Snow's 'literary intellectual' is the enemy of art and life."[40] He also points out how Snow shifts his point of view and "slips from his 'Literary Culture' into 'The Traditional Culture'". He concludes by saying, "If his lecture has any values for use in schools - or universities - it is a document for the study of cliche".[41] Leavis dismisses Snow even as a novelist, "Snow not only hasn't in him the beginning of a novelist, he is utterly without a glimmer of what creative literature is, or why it matters."[42]

In keeping with the line of attack that Leavis opens up, Bernard Bergonzi in his book, The Turn of a

Century, calls Snow a modern reactionary, attacking the modern literature which Snow associates with traditional literary culture. Bergonzi says that 'it's time it (his attack on traditional literary culture) was shown up as demonstrable nonsense.'[43]

It's now generally agreed that Snow's Two Cultures is full of generalities and over-simplified statements. Jerome Thale in his book on C.P.Snow (Writers and Critics series) says the last word on the Rede Lecture by saying that the first difficulty with it is that it is 'essentially rhetorical.'[44] He tries to protect Snow by saying that The Two Cultures was a lecture of a 'public man, moved by the urgency of the problem.'[45] Thale attributes the lack of precision in the lecturer to 'unfortunate miscalculation.' Thale agrees that the lecture contains a good deal of over-generalization and a good deal of over-simplification, but he attributes this failure to Snow's rhetoric rather than to his lack of knowledge or insight.[46]

What is important for our study is the views that Snow has expressed in his Two Cultures and to see how far they are reflected or modified in his novels. In this connection it is necessary to take into consideration Jerome Thale's view that there is very little connection between his two culture theory and novels:

> "The most famous and contraversial of his non-fiction writings are The Two Cultures and Science and Government. For any one who comes to them from the novels their effect is to raise the question of their relation to Snow's fiction. It is clear that they are not of a piece with the novels. There are some common concerns, the interest in power and in science, But one might well imagine the author of the Strangers and Brothers sequence to belong to the literary culture scolded in The Two Cultures, or one might imagine the author of The Two Cultures to be a person wihtout much interest in fiction. Snow put it mildly when he said the novels and the non-fiction are not similar so much as complementary."[47]

My submission is that Jerome Thale's assumption that there is a dichotomy between the man of letters and the public man in Snow's personality. But this assumption cannot be accepted. Since the writer's major concerns are bound to appear in one form or another in the fiction that he creates. We know of at least three major novels of Snow's which directly deal with his concerns regarding the two cultures and the gap between them. In this dissertation, therefore, I'm going to focus my attention on these novels and examine

various kind of relationships, direct and indirect, between The Two Cultures and the novels in terms of characters, introduction between characters, and the conceptions of various situations and incidents in which the characters participate. Our detailed examination of the three novels, (1) The Masters (1951), (2) The New Men (1954) and (3) The Affair (1960), will certainly disprove Jerome Thale's assumption of dissociation of consciousness in C.P.Snow's personality.

Notes and References

1. William Cooper, C.P.Snow, London; the British Council, 1959, p.8 (Prefatory note to the re-issue of The Search).
2. Jerome Thale, C.P.Snow, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964, p.12.
3. Ibid., p.2.
4. F.R.Leavis, 'The significance of C.P.Snow', in The Spectator, March9, 1962, p.302.
5. Robert Graham Davis, C.P.Snow, p.8.
6. Cooper, p.12.
7. Ibid., p.13.
8. Thale, p.10.
9. Ibid., p.12.
10. Anthony Burgess, The Novel Now, London: Faber and Faber, 1971, p.82.
11. Davis, p.7.
12. Cooper, p.16.
13. Thale, p.29.
14. Ibid., p.30.
15. Times Literary Supplement, London: O.U.P., 1973.
16. C.P.Snow, The Two Cultures and A Second Look, Cambridge University Press, 1963, p.16.
17. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
18. Ibid., p.17.

19. Ibid., p.3.
20. Ibid., p.4.
21. Ibid., p.4.
22. Ibid., pp.4-5.
23. Ibid., p.5.
24. Ibid., p.11.
25. Ibid., p.13.
26. Luddites are workmen who formed into a group in 1811, in a period of great distress with the object of destroying the new taxtile machinery then being largely adopted, which they regarded as the cause of their trouble. The first outbreak was at Nottingham, and was stated to have been started by a young apprentice named Ned Ludd. Afterwards, serious Luddite riots occured in various parts of the country, where many people were killed, mills were stroyed and members of riots were tried and executed. (c.f. Charlette Bronte's Novel, Shirley) - Ed. L.Mary Borkor, Pears Cyclopaedia, PL 72, 73rd Edn, (Bungay, Suffolk, U.K.), 1964.

27. Snow, p.25.
28. Ibid., p.25.
29. Ibid., p.27.
30. Ibid., p.29.

31. Ibid., p.32.
32. Ibid., p.46.
33. Ibid., p.60.
34. Ibid., p.90.
35. Ibid., p.98.
36. Ibid., p.100.
37. T.L.S. Friday, May 22, 1959, p.305.
38. The Spectator, March 9, 1962, p.297 ('The Significance of C.P.Snow' by F.R.Leavis).
39. Ibid., p.297.
40. Ibid., p.299.
41. Ibid., p.300.
42. Ibid., p.300.
43. Bernard Bergonzi, The Turn of a Century, Essays on Victorian and Modern English Literature, London: Macmillan, 1973., p.177.
44. Thale, p.91.
45. Ibid., p.91.
46. Ibid., pp.91-92.
47. Ibid., p.87.