Basanta Kumar Mallik and Robert Graves: Personal Encounters & Processes in Socio-Cultural Thought

Madhuri Santanam Sondhi & Mary M. Walker

Basanta Kumar Mallik has been a somewhat shadowy figure in Gravesian scholarship. Partly this is due to Graves' expunging of all references to Mallik in editions of *Good-bye to All That* subsequent to 1929, but even more to his repudiation of his philosophical poetry (Good-bye, 402-5). Moreover, such references as there are in the 1929 edition are often imaginative and misleading, and have remained the main source for a distorted view of his one-time friend. There also appears to be a family bias against Mallik, who is believed to have dominated Robert during his Islip days. Thus the biographers relying on these sources tend to devalue Mallik, though in some studies of his early poetry, literary critics exhibit a more positive evaluation of Mallik's impact on Graves' development through their analysis of his philosophical poems. These critics include James McKinley, Patrick Quinn, Michael Kirkham and JM Cohen. None of the writers, however, refer directly to Mallik or his works.

It is our contention that the relationship between Graves and Mallik was humanly and intellectually of value to both, and in some respects, their informal discussions have probably had as far-reaching consequences as some of the particulars of the philosophical scheme they were both engaged in evolving.

We propose to examine the relationship between Basanta Kumar Mallik and Robert Graves under four headings: the first, biographical, mainly to put on record a few facts relating to Mallik as a corrective to the misleading account given by Graves and his later biographers and scholars and to describe the encounter between the two friends from some not so well-known sources; the second, philosophical, to outline more descriptively than critically, those aspects of Mallik's philosophy which occupied him and his friends during his Oxford days; the third, literary, to consider the impact of Mallik's ideas on Graves' poetry, and also to examine the possibility of Graves' influence on Mallik's literary writing, and the fourth, socio-cultural, to contextualise the ending of their friendship.

Basanta Kumar Mallik - biographical

Mallik was born in 1879 in Bengal, and the Sen Sharma family

genealogical tree shows him to be descended from a small princely line, which acquired the title Mallik after the establishment of Muslim rule in the area. By the time Basanta was born, the family had lost whatever wealth and power it might earlier have enjoyed, and his father was an employee of the British government. There is no indication that he converted to Christianity as Graves has asserted. For many of the Bengali *bhadralok* (upper castes/classes) consumption of alcohol or meat was a status symbol of modernity: it might even have helped advance a career in the service of the British government. Mallik's father tried to live in the grand manner of a *burra sahib*, but when this resulted in mounting debts and economic burdens, he drank himself to death. Basanta was then a child of seven.

Whether Mallik hated the English as Graves writes is questionable: he achieved academic excellence at Christian missionary schools and western educational institutions in Calcatta, where he was on friendly terms with several of his English tutors. The courses for his Bachelors and Masters degrees (1902, 1903) in philosophy, would have been primarily if not exclusively in Western philosophy. He was, however, strongly affected by the fate which had overtaken his father and which cast such a shadow over his own life, psychologically, emotionally, and materially. Mallik became a consistent anti-imperialist, though not a political activist, and reached a decision, to which he adhered even after his rich and fruitful years in Oxford, never to (like his father) accept employment from the imperial government. This foreclosed an academic career in the state-financed universities. He stuck to this resolve despite the many real difficulties it created for him. Throughout his life he also exhibited a consistent aversion to proselytizers, and would come down heavily on anyone daring to make a case for the missionary thesis in his presence. He included conversion as an instance of aggression in his theory of conflict and was totally opposed to religious expansionism. Dislike of Christian missionaries was widespread throughout India at the time, and part of the anti-imperialist agenda of the national movement, endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi, was to put a curb on their activities. Indian nationalists opposed imperialism without hating the British: indeed, "it is remarkable how little of that dubious entity known as 'reverse racism' manifested itself in the anticolonial movements" (Anderson, 153).

After graduation, Mallik took up sundry occupations until he was introduced to the Nepalese Prime Minister in 1909, in search of a tutor for his sons. Once in politically independent Kathmandu, he proved

himself useful to the government in enough ways for him to be consulted on several matters relating to the foreign office. Knowing of his wish to study in Oxford—the goal of many Indian academics—the Prime Minister agreed to send him there in 1912 to study law, so as to qualify him for further governmental duties.

Thus Mallik was enrolled at Exeter College at the age of 33 as an undergraduate student. Far from being a 'Bengali lawyer', he was not gifted with a legalistic mind, but managed a BA in Jurisprudence by 1916, and dutifully ate his dinners at the Society of Lincoln's Inn (*Good-bye*, 402). The outbreak of war prevented his immediate return to Nepal after graduation, so his tutor and good friend, the anthropologist R.R. Marrett, encouraged Mallik to get a certificate in Physical and Cultural Anthropology (1918) and a Diploma in Anthropology (1919). Professors Marrett, Clement Webb, J.A. Smith and others introduced Mallik to the company of their academic colleagues, and he also made his way into the literary circles that frequented the Bridges' house on Boars Hill. The Bridges were to remain his friends for life.

Mallik never abandoned his philosophical pursuits, even during the long years taken up by law and anthropology. After the war was over, he sought and got permission from his Nepalese patrons to do a Ph.D., then known as B.Litt., in philosophy. He was thus able to spend another five years at Oxford, which were marked by the intellectual flowering recalled by his fellow students. Whether as an undergraduate or graduate, Mallik was more affluent than the average student, getting a handsome grant from the Nepalese government. He was able to entertain and help his friends generously, and this no doubt added to his mystique, although thanks to his over-liberality, he also underwent periods of privation in between arrivals of the overseas drafts.

Graves and Mallik first met one another at the Lotus Club in Oxford (according to biographer and nephew R. P. Graves this could only have taken place in 1922) and were drawn to one another at once. Alan Collingridge, later Dean of Morley College, London, himself had met Mallik at the same Club in 1920, where he watched him rapidly became the centre of a bright and talented group of students—Tom (Sam) Harries, Sydney Lewis, William Elliott, Wilfred Roberts, Edward O'Brien, Stringfellow Barr, L.A.G. Strong, T.E. Lawrence, Robert Graves, and many Asian students, several of whom were to become prominent in public and academic life in their own countries. It was at this club, Collingridge writes,

> that Mallik's fellow-students first heard the formulation of the Conflict Theory and watched it develop in his mind. Perhaps more particularly this process took place in his rooms at 22 Farndon Road, the back room on the ground floor, or out at Robert Graves' cottage at Islip, where Basanta would cook us a wonderful vegetable stew. I remember bringing him back one night on the pillion of my motor cycle, along the rough and dark country lanes, and the sense of complete peace and confidence he distilled by his calm. The sharpest contrast in our styles of talk was that between Mallik (as we all called him then) and Robert Graves. Mallik would formulate his point in a beautiful, balanced, delicate structure, when suddenly some strong intuition of Robert's could no longer be contained, and he would burst out in some vivid comment. But hardly had one seemed to hear the fragments of Mallik's structure fall tinkling to the ground, before he had erected another, swiftly and perfectly and sympathetically adapted to meet Robert's point. As Tommy Harries said: "Mallik's talk is like a crown of jewels, while Robert's is like a flash of lightning."

Collingridge also gives a graphic description of a favourite game of Graves'—"Grab Hanky", in which he could beat everyone except Mallik:

> One moment (Robert's) hand would be poised, steady as a rock: the next he was safely behind the line, the winner, moving more swiftly than a salamander's tongue, quicker than thought, any body's thought except Mallik's, that is. For Mallik with his still greater quickness and self-control, would hold his action in reserve, walk quietly up to the hanky, hold his hand steady, rock-steady, above Rob's head in spite of every feint at a grab, and then, at the very instant Rob's finger touched the hanky, let his hand fall before Rob got away.

He concludes:

> This demeanour, in the talk and in the game, was searchingly indicative of one of the principal of all Basanta's characteristics, his immediate and complete acknowledgement of even the slightest difficulty or objection. He remained in complete poise, instantly sensitive to every demand. He would not permit, in himself or

> other to whom he was talking, the slightest brushing aside of an awkward fact or argument.... (Collingridge)

William Elliott, later Professor of Government at Harvard, also tells of the unique ascendancy Mallik had established in the philosophic, religious and artistic circles around the Lotus Club. He describes the discussions between representatives of the Jesuit community from St. Giles and this "stocky Hindu" as those of "archangels wrestling for our souls." Or, he compares them to Platonic dialogues, with "Basanta in the role of Socrates. ... His mind approached Western classical philosophy with great sympathy and understanding: but he brought to bear such a power of spirit, combined with compassion and sympathetic understanding, that one could not doubt his greatness. He was one of the prophets of our time" (Garland, 132).

Graves and Mallik shared an engagement with the phenomenon of opposition as a basic aspect of reality, a commitment to truth and to morality, a discomfort with received tradition and a search for an understanding and resolution of the phenomenon of war. When they first met, Graves as an undergraduate was just beginning to philosophically grapple with these problems, (though his early poetry carries several anticipations); the older Mallik had spent more time on them and had more developed views.

There is enough evidence to suggest that Mallik's evolving philosophical thesis was conceived of as a joint enterprise between him, Graves, Sam Harries and Sydney Lewis (a musician). Mallik acknowledged the contributions of his associates when his work was finally published in 1940, although he omitted Graves' name (as Graves omitted reference to him in his new edition of *Good-bye*) because of their recent break. Otherwise, Graves in a letter to Siegfried Sassoon regarding *Mock Beggar Hall*, triumphantly speaks of the fact that we, i.e., Mallik and he together, have fundamental metaphysical suggestions to offer the public. He also wrote that he had "*loathed* philosophy until (he) met Mallik [as he *loathed* poetry till he met (Graves)]" (O'Prey, 151-3). This is not true of either of them, but the underlying notion has been better expressed in Graves' "Interchange of Selves" where the Philosopher tells the Poet that the expression of "a fantastic drama enacting itself obscurely in my dreams ... will be of great assistance in the development of my philosophical system, as you say that your philosophic talks with me are similarly of assistance to you in your writing even of romantic poetry."

Not much has been recorded of the discussions that took place between Graves and Mallik, though there are indications in *Poetic Unreason* that apart from philosophy, these covered topics like poetry, folk-song, and theatre, often in a comparative context between India and Europe (*Poetic*, 34, 35, 42). One may surmise other exchanges which might well have taken place in the light of subsequent developments. We know that Mallik regaled his friends with tales of his experiences in the exotic court of Kathmandu. The Ranas, his employers, were the de facto rulers, but observed all the rituals connected with the legitimate if ineffective monarchy. One unique institution concerns the incarnate virgin goddess, the Kumari, present in a chosen girl-child. Embodying the power of the goddess, she performs an important role in certain state rituals and ceremonies. She is the only human before whom the king, himself, considered an incarnation of the god Vishnu, makes obeisance. Moreover, Mallik was a Bengali, and Bengal is where the Goddess as Mother is still fervently worshipped. (Bengal also has a strong *Shakti* tradition, which includes sexual mysticism and the worship of female energy in various forms, but with his Vaishnavite background, and with the general disrepute into which Tantra had fallen at the time, this is unlikely to have figured in Mallik's conversations.) The greatest family festival of the year, equivalent to Christmas in Europe, is Durga Puja, which occurs in the autumn, when Devi, or the goddess, is worshipped for several days in homes and public places in her white aspect, as slayer of the demon Mahesha. Again, as the fair Saraswati, goddess of learning and the arts, she is annually worshipped at another major family celebration. There is an apocryphal ascription of the name and founding of Calcatta to a village with a temple to Kali, who, as the black goddess, remains the presiding deity of Calcatta. Bengalis, because of this widespread goddess worship, have a deeply ingrained respect for womanhood, very noticeable in comparison with other Indians. Even fathers will address their little daughters as "Maa"—Mother, signifying the goddess. The 19th century Bengal Renaissance built on this basic regard for women by absorbing into it modern notions regarding formal education, social and political participation. Mallik inherited, to a remarkable extent, this respect and sensitivity with regard to women, which would have further endeared him to Robert and Nancy, especially given her feminist predilections. (According to Mary Walker who was present at the meeting, Nancy went to visit Mallik in Oxford after he returned in the late thirties.) Graves' much later con-

ceptualization of the White Goddess is embedded in Celtic and Mediterranean mythologies, but it may well be that through Mallik he first became aware of the notion of Goddess-worship and of an incarnating Goddess as a living institution, for it is hardly likely that he could have been so intimate with a Bengali and not hear of the Goddess, anymore than it is possible for an Indian to have a close friendship with an Englishman and not hear of Christmas. The goddess, or the principle of energy, however, never figured in Mallik's philosophical schema, nor was Devi his family deity. He hailed from Nadia, renowned both for its logicians and the devotional cult of Krishna. But the Goddess permeates the life, language and culture of all Bengal. The two Indian mystics mentioned in The White Goddess, Sri Ramakrishna and Ramprasad Sen, are both Bengalis.

A.P. Graves, Robert's father, has recorded an occasion when he and his wife, on a visit to Islip, felt apprehensive at what appeared to them to be Mallik's domination over Robert (*Assault*, 278). It must in particular have alarmed his Christian mother, who had once wanted to be a missionary in India. (Christian missionaries spread bizarre accounts of Hindu or Indian society and its religions in Europe, to facilitate their fund-raising). One may examine how real, deep or pathological this "domination" was, given the personalities and situation of the two. Graves in those days was still traumatized by the war; supporting a wife and four children was a source of constant financial anxiety, in addition to which there were marital problems. He must have been reassured by Mallik's calm and soothing personality, which, combined with their common intellectual pursuits, would explain his over-enthusiastic adoption of Mallik's philosophic concepts as a means to order his own felt chaos. Graves himself wrote in the 1929 *Good-bye* that "his continuing attempts to write a novel of war memoirs brought back neurasthenic symptoms, but indications are that the attacks became fewer and less intense after he met Mallik" (Quinn, 116-7).

Indeed, Graves appeared to be constantly in search of someone on whom he could lean intellectually and emotionally, a kind of substitute for the adored mother who had shaped his religious and ethical views in childhood. Several of his friends and the women in his life took on portions of this role—amongst whom one may count Mallik, T.E. Lawrence and Nancy Nicholson at Oxford, later Laura Riding, and finally Beryl, who also benevolently presided over the succession of minor Muses. Of these, only Riding appears to have had a compulsively domineering personality, which was felt and noticed by all who came in contact with her.

There is a sense in which individuals "influence" one another, but this is not a radical sense. Graves actually records in *Good-bye* that Mallik advised him to beware of being dominated by another. In Mallikean terms one would have to distinguish between "giving" "influencing" and "dominating". Relationships of *giving and receiving* are equal, in that the giving of the one depends on the receiving of the other. At any instant, from the point of view of any individual, he or she is either actor or recipient of action, and these two states constantly alternate. Both are necessary for effective action, and there is no superiority or inferiority in giving or receiving. *Influencing* also, Mallik assumes, is equal, particularly in conflicts, where both contribute to the imbroglio and are mutually affected and influenced in the course of it. No one at the end of a conflict is quite the same person he or she was at the start. *Domination*, however, implies a sustained asymmetry and offends against Mallik's dearly held principle of equality. There is no reason to believe that he was out to dominate Graves against his own best advice or that theirs was a purely mentor-student relationship. Given what is known of Mallik's personality and his easy relationships with numerous other friends, it would be uncharacteristic to attribute to him an actual wish to dominate Graves, as hinted at by Seymour-Smith (114-5) and R.P. Graves (*Assault*, 282-9).

Be that as it may, anxiety regarding this Indian friend never quite left the family, right up to the final break between him and Graves in the thirties: his half-sister Molly was disturbed lest Robert accept Mallik's invitation to come to India and did her best to dissuade him. She was apparently successful (*Assault*, 282-9). After Mallik's return to India (greeted with a sigh of relief by Graves' aunt), he reached Nepal in 1923, but could not re-enter service. In his absence, through the Byzantine manoeuvres of palace politics, the ears of the Prime Minister had been poisoned against him. So Mallik returned to Calcatta, and for five years suffered the psychological and material anxieties of the unemployed—for he still stubbornly refused to take a government job. He circulated, however, amongst the prominent political and intellectual figures of the day and dialogued with Gandhi and Nehru. Sam Harries while visiting him in Calcatta in 1924 died of a cerebral infection, and Sydney Lewis not long after, at his own home. The invitation to Graves and Lawrence to visit Mallik in Nepal, mentioned in the 1929 *Good-bye*, was given before leaving the shores of England, when he was still confident of returning to his old employment. It could not be redeemed. By the time he actually did return to

Nepal in 1929, after other Ranas had succeeded to the Prime Ministership, the invitation does not appear to have been renewed (nor would it have been accepted); by now Mallik would be wary of taking his position for granted. Thus death and distance took a toll of the close Oxford friendships.

Flush with funds again, Mallik was able to live decently for a period of four years, even acquire a farm in Bengal to experiment with his conflict-avoidance techniques. The good spell ended only too soon when a scheme was hatched by some at court for a proposed railway service to north-western Nepal, which in Mallik's judgement was designed to benefit the developers to the detriment of the local people. His disapproval of the scheme led to threats on his life, so he, quite literally, walked out of Nepal. No small feat. He took no luggage, refused the Maharaja's horses when they were sent after him, (there were then no cars or motorable roads) and collapsed 22 miles from the Indo-Nepal border. He was in his late fifties, had a mastoid infection and a heart problem. Shortly before this incident, his only and younger brother, Asim, had died after his latest spell of political imprisonment.

All these years in India he had not been in an atmosphere conducive to writing, due to the unsettled and precarious nature of his existence, and all that we know of for certain is that he contributed a paper to the First Indian Philosophical Congress in 1925. His return to Europe in 1936 is one of those stranger than fiction stories which sometimes occurred in his life (Lewis, 39-41). He settled again in Oxford, where he was to write a series of philosophical works and also lecture for some time at the University. He died there in December 1958 (Lewis, 55-77).

How is it that Graves knew so little about his friend, and knowing so little, invented so much? Mallik was a very private person and many of his friends of several decades knew next to nothing about his personal life, except for the barest details. He himself was older than nearly all of them, longer schooled in adversity, restrained and reserved (sixteen years separated him and Graves).

It is quite probable that Graves misunderstood and embroidered certain hints dropped by Mallik about his background. He might have imagined his father's conversion to Christianity as a reason to explain Mallik's strong dislike of missionaries, not realizing that it was symptomatic of India's rejection of European imperialism. Again "British

political psychology" as a subject of study at Oxford is Graves' own fanciful invention, perhaps a mischievous mirror-reversal of anthropology. Graves wrote *Good-bye* when he was pressed both for money and for time. Siegfried Sassoon was to complain that Graves had been in too much of a hurry to check his facts (Seymour-Smith, 196). It is now generally agreed that despite the considerable literary qualities of *Good-bye*, it not a reliable source book. All the more surprising that later researchers did not look for "Mallik" in the library catalogues: all his books, with the exception of one posthumous collection of essays, were published in England—two by Allen & Unwin (1939 and 1940), two by Hall the Publisher of Oxford (1950 and 1952), and the rest, including a memorial volume of tributes, essays and a short biography, by Vincent Stuart of London (1953, 1957, 1959 and 1961).

MALLIK'S PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT IN OXFORD

There is very little direct evidence of Mallik's philosophical position while he was at Oxford apart from his thesis on *The Problem of Freedom* submitted for the degree of B.Litt. The small literary piece written together with Graves—"Interchange of Selves" — is poetically evocative, and suggests his characteristic thesis of mutual responsibility in conflict. But there are stronger hints in the remembrances of Elliott and Collingridge regarding the span of his ideas in the post-war days. For the purposes of the present paper we can concentrate on those aspects which appear to have figured in conversations with his friends and companions—his theory of conflict, of ethics and of individuals.

Mallik's thesis on the *Problem of Freedom* covered his general metaphysical position and his theory of individuals. His philosophy of conflict was not included in the thesis, nor committed to paper. However we know to the precise date, Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, when he arrived at the new formulation of the Law of Contradiction which was to form the fulcrum of his conflict theory. His ethical views, particularly as relating to mutual responsibility, are thinly sketched in the thesis and were probably more elaborated in his discussions.

It was Mallik's general philosophic position that ideas and events imply one another. He came up to Oxford when it was dominated by the British Hegelians, and although much of his philosophy is a rejection of Hegelianism, inevitably it has imbibed certain presuppositions. As he graphically expressed it: on the battlefield, it is not merely the

soldier who fights, but also a theory. And by theory he meant not simply a strategic theory, but a philosophical theory of reality and value.

THEORY OF CONFLICT:

In brief, Mallik's theory of conflict has philosophical, sociological and historical dimensions, and through its exploration of relevant mental processes illustrates the UNESCO adage, that war begins in the minds of men.

PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS:

Logically, Mallik's theory revolves round the confusion between contradiction and contrariety. The Law of Contradiction, strictly of logical importance and application, deals with cases of *impossibility* between two terms A and not-A, where the affirmation of the one implies the total negation of the other. As contraries, A and not-A are mutually implicate, paired opposites, sharing a metaphysical space, though they cannot actualize together in the objective world. This is a weaker form of negation.

Conflicts are generally about values, commonly paired in opposites—freedom and order, individuality and community, political right and left, monotheism and polytheism. Since we tend to apply the Law of Contradiction to differing religions or ideologies or social systems which are built on conflicting clusters of value and disvalue, the affirmation of any one implies the total negation or devaluation of the other. Thus tension and conflict are generic to thinking in contradictories and appear to have dominated human thought for millennia.

In his major works, Mallik elaborated this theory by the introduction of concepts like absolutes and mythology, which analyze in more detail how a particular value is magnified into an illusory universal absolute, totally invalidating its opposite, to "fit" the Law of Contradiction. This is accomplished by one term being inflated into an absolute universal so that its opposite is stripped of its *raison d'etre* for logical or actual existence. However, the universal has to be supported by a Principle of Unequal Valuation to account for the not-A which refuses to disappear. This intransigent not-A can now be termed temporary, not quite real or true, even false or evil. This will be illustrated in some societal examples below. The notion of absolute value also leads to the need to try to remove, suppress or convert the offending not-A, and for this Mallik employed the term "mythology", both sub-

stantively, as a noun, when referring to the myths of the absolute which govern societies and individuals, and as a verb, to describe the actions undertaken to reify the absolute (This adaptation of the word "mythology" is peculiar to Mallik).

Thus the predisposing mental attitudes to war and other forms of conflict result from the *illusion* of thinking one's cherished values to be absolute and universal, and of those opposed to them as *contradictories* which must be completely negated or eliminated. Such thought processes naturally lead to divers expressions of *mythology*: missions of religious or political (ideological) conversion, military conflicts, patterns of structural dominance, economic expansionism or political revolution. In extreme cases, they can even result in attempted genocide.

Viewed from the looser perspective of contrariety, values opposed to one's own do not appear so threatening or demand such strong action to deal with them. Opposites are equal though they may be incompatible. No value or value-system is absolutely true, and we may say that all opposing viewpoints are incomplete, or in Mallik's terminology, non-absolute. Incidentally, non-absolute is a much more positive statement than mere relativity. We will expand on this below.

SOCIOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS:

The skeletal structure of the sociological aspects of conflict were already being discussed during Mallik's Oxford days. There is an intrinsic tension between individual and community life based on the fact of differences amongst individuals. However, the possibility of community life rests on their agreements (on identity, common survival). Since both individual and group values cannot be given equal importance from the functional point of view, different patterns of ordering have evolved in different societies. One value is chosen as the foundation for the social structure, either the individual or the group, and the Principle of Unequal Valuation is utilized for rationalizing its opposite into the system of values. If a society is organized on the principle of individuality, the groups cease to be intrinsically important and exist only to serve the individual, and the reverse occurs in group-important societies. Later, Mallik was to add a third method of societal organization, where the community, related through a particular conception of a personal God, is the supreme value and excludes all non-believers. In group societies, the groups and their constituting individuals seek "at-oneness" or harmony with one another, in individualist societies freedom and independence, and in community soci-

eties, solidarity and relationship. These systems, organized on opposing principles, threaten one another: they cannot but view one another as contradictory and incompatible. Hence, the almost uncontrollable impulse to fight or dominate or destroy one another in a perceived or visceral attempt at self-preservation through universalization.

The three major patterns of social ordering reflect in socio-cultural structures and institutions and can be seen to underpin many different societies, cultures and civilizations which otherwise display particularistic differences. As examples of these patterns we may cite Britain as an individualist society (where family, community and some religious structures remain, but are subordinate to individual requirements); today's Iran or medieval Christendom as community societies, (where community interests coexist with unless challenged by, individual values), and traditional India as a group society, (where a multitude of interlinked and graded groups have clear priority over individuals). There has, however, been so much historical interaction and interpenetration that it is no longer possible to identify *pure* instances of such social organizations, though predominant profiles are still recognizable. Mallik found the classification heuristically useful in his analysis of important and major conflicts, where it was possible to discern the opposing value-systems rooted in differing social systems or in internal disagreements amongst the major systems over the best method of operationalizing those agreed values. Conservatives and Labour competing in Britain within the agreed aegis of the democratic system or Protestants and Catholics over the proper meaning of Christianity are instances of internal conflicts.

This illustrates another nodal point of Mallik's conflict theory that all conflicts have a common background. Within the social systems, this shared background is easier to discern: the challenge comes when conflicts arise *between* the major systems. The most important inter-civilizational conflict (if we for the sake of convenience substitute civilization for social organization) which Mallik experienced was, of course, between Britain, as exemplifying modern individualism or humanism (an anthropocentric ideology) and India, the archetypal group or absorptionist (exhibiting tendencies to absorb all groups, individuals and ideas under an overarching monism) society. The incompatibility between the individual and the group society is acute and does not easily suggest a common background. Mallik recognized the difficulty, and sought for an answer in a time dimension. For the present, he acknowledged irreconcilable positions and advocated abstention

between the opposing groups to allow for the emergence of a space of peace: after its establishment it would become possible to discern the latent common background based on the harmonizing of opposing values into complementaries. This is a task for the future.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY:

In Mallik's Oxford thesis, he appears to adopt Hegel's description of history as a series of triadic movements constituted by clashing opposites and their "synthetic unities", though he was soon after to reject the logical possibility of "synthesis of opposites" as thoroughly irrational and unrealistic. However, he obviously pressed it at the Lotus Club, and it is one concept which Graves never abandoned for the rest of his life. Mallik himself progressed to a "seesaw" description of historical movement, where opposites alternately dominate, are never destroyed or subsumed, but may, for periods, decay into confusion or impasse before reasserting themselves in new forms. Thus history so far, despite its periodic victories and gains, is an overall record of frustration for universalizing value-systems. It is difficult to speak of real achievement and progress since all values are alternately frustrated or of peace which has so far only manifested as the alternating face of war.

However, Mallik's earlier metaphysical position implied a cosmos beginning and ending in freedom, for which he used the term absolute, and he envisioned the series of triadic movements and later even the seesaw necessarily culminating in a positive end. This utopian future is guaranteed by the capacity of the human mind to analyze its proclivities for conflict, to recognize these conflicts as self-defeating and to achieve emancipation through avoiding them. Societies will be driven, he averred, for the sake of survival to devise new ways of coexistence and strive for stable peace. Towards this end, Mallik was confident he had made a definitive contribution.

ETHICS OF MUTUAL ABSTENTION:

We can now better understand his ethics of mutual responsibility and abstention, which derive from this conflict theory. If two parties are in conflict, they are each obviously pressing for the establishment, expansion or defence of a believed absolute value, in terms of which its opposite is contradictory. Illusions on both sides are responsible for engendering tension. Furthermore, one or maybe both are resorting to mythology—to persuasion, conversion, dominance, or suppression, to

prevail over the other. Once one is aware that these methods are both illegitimate and ineffective in that they can at most deliver a temporary, not a lasting success, then one is obliged to reconsider the significance and utility of an absolute insistence on one's own standpoint. This applies to interpersonal and inner conflicts as well, where both parties must needs review positions which lead to tension and locate the source of illusion. Instead of trying to "realize" value, they are now in a position to abstain from conflict.

Mallik summarizes the process of abstention in this way: "We have to mature knowledge (and strengthened with its assurance) to eliminate the illusory conceptions of Reality, and abstain from working out those values which such concepts have created. ...What have been known as values must all go" (*Non-Absolutes*, 254-8). This is not a plea, as a first reading may suggest, to throw overboard all received values, but to relocate them within the new framework of contrariety, leading to a moderation of their absolute nature. These efforts will transform individuals who have lived in illusion and perpetual conflict to people living with confidence and certainty. Abstention may appear to yield only negative results, but until conflict has been wholly and successfully neutralized, positive objectives cannot appear. In the meantime, individuals can enjoy the experience of certainty and also the security arising from their position of equality with others which rules out domination or destruction. Abstention is ideally mutual, but even if initiated individually, it may yet transform the opponent who will be confronted with new experiences, born of equality and fearlessness.

Given the absolutist conditioning of the human mind, once a value-system is perceived to be less than absolute, (after experiencing defeat or inferiority), the tendency is to relinquish it for another perceived absolute or perfect system. In this way victors and vanquished have exchanged values in the past. It is not possible for a society or for individuals to function in a value-vacuum, and a very piquant situation arises when both sides become aware of their respective incompleteness, threatening dehumanization and chaos. The moment of truth is essential for taking the edge out of tension, but Mallik nowhere suggests abandoning all values:—it is only on occasions when internal or external tensions threaten to explode that Mallik advocates restraint and abstention from pushing the argument or disagreement to the brink. At the same time, to maintain the movement towards a more peaceful world, he advocates the importance of "removing the corpses from the battlefield"—the corpses of dead dogma and tradition.

The unique feature of the evolving world in the twentieth century has been the stalemate between all traditional systems, and in this Mallik included modernity, which he classified as a restatement of classical humanism, albeit more powerful and dominating than its predecessor. Laura Riding, aware of the emerging and unprecedented situation after the Great War, described it as the "end of history", and recommended for the sensitive a cultivation of the moral and aesthetic sensibility far from the common crowd. More recently, in the aftermath of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama has revived this expression in a different Hegelian mood to describe the universal consolidation of the American liberal, capitalist, consumerist paradigm (Fukuyama, 18). But it would be premature to pronounce on either the "sorry" or "triumphal" end of history, and Mallik's thesis, of a continuing telic movement towards global harmony, remains a utopian goal in the best sense of utopia.

There is, to be sure, a widespread confusion of values, which is described by some post-modernists as "relativism". Relativism, however, can easily become a source of non-value or a mask for a concealed absolutism. Relativism rests on the notion of equal and arbitrary assumed hypotheses on which differing and internally coherent systems can be constructed. It thus debunks all values or enables the shrugging off of values other than one's own as also "relative" and unworthy of attention. Mallik's theory of non-absolutes points to the skewed emphases on paired values in the different societal-cultural schemes and implicitly recognizes prevailing value-systems as equal both in respect of *their achievement in ordering society* and in their intrinsic *inability to achieve universality and completeness*. As mutually dependent and entailing contraries, no values are dispensable. All, therefore, are deserving of respect tempered with reservation.

Apparent relativism occurs in the Determinate Universe, which is disciplined by the principle of equality, in terms of both rights and responsibilities, but there is an underlying assumption and certainty that it will become possible to re-order the skewed values in equal and harmonious fashion. Grounded in the relatedness of all individuals and groups across space and time, Mallik's theory welcomes the present impasse of values as an opportunity to develop a healthy scepticism about received, conflict-prone traditional dogmas. This, however, is only the prelude to a search for a system which can harmonize the fundamental social values without sacrificing pluralism. In other words, he does not eliminate the possibility of arriving at truth and

certainty on which the task of envisioning the future will be based.

His colleagues at Oxford may not have followed all the twists and turns of this theory of conflict and abstention (of which we have also included the more mature elements as later developed). Elliott, for example, despite his great respect for Mallik, had fears about a moral relativism lurking beneath an ethics of abstention, and his preferred thesis of absolute right and wrong later sharpened in the context of the Cold War (Incidentally Mallik went on record in the fifties as saying that there would be no atomic—nuclear - war in this century). Elliott's pupil, Samuel Huntington, continued this Manichean bent in his thesis of irreconcilable clash and conflict between civilizations based on their incompatible values (Huntington, 22-49). With the exception of intimates like Graves, Strong and some others, it was difficult for most in Oxford to accept that in a conflict, to use Gravesian terminology, "both sides are wrong." For Mallik, each side represented some portion of truth, neither was totally "wrong", but both were wrong in deeming their own position to be absolutely correct and that of the other completely wanting in merit. Even so, few were prepared to surrender their sense of complete moral certitude. The majority might well conclude Hitler was "all wrong" and the Allies "all right". Mallik would profoundly disagree, since his analysis of responsibility would not commence with the outbreak of war, but with the origins of tension between the protagonists. In a parallel effort, Hannah Arendt, in her *Origins of Totalitarianism* sought to uncover the reasons for the Holocaust both from the Jewish as well as the German position in a search for what amounts to mutual responsibility. No thesis of mutual responsibility, however, can be a justification for subsequent aggression or genocide, but it is heuristically useful in tracing the origins of conflict and in developing guidelines for their future avoidance.

INDIVIDUALS:

Mallik's view of the individual combined his own insights with borrowings from western metaphysics. He held that reality was vested in the individual, but the two were not independent and unrelated—reality is composed of individuals "in deep and intimate relationship with one another". Individuals, moreover, always live in groups governed by common goals or ends. Mallik also held that the universe of contingency, or the Determinate Universe, was totally governed by necessity, through a Leibnizian Law of Pre-established Harmony, which further weakens the case for complete independence or self-sufficiency

for the individual. But all are *equal* in that each is necessarily *unique* and also *similar* to others and integral to the totality of existence. All individuals embody reality (in which he includes both human and non-human individuals), and therefore all must be respected. It is because we have skewed conceptions of reality and value-systems—which emphasize one at the expense of another related and contrary value—that we have throughout history found it quite acceptable to sacrifice some individuals for the sake of ensuring the survival of others, both within society, and with perceived "enemy" societies. For Mallik, no individual is expendable: and since real-related individuals always live in groups, by extension, all cultural and social groups needs must be accorded a similar and equal respect.

One may note that in placing reality in interrelated and interacting individuals, Mallik departed from the Indian philosophic tradition as commonly perceived. It would be misleading, therefore, to describe him as just another representative of Eastern wisdom. He was, indeed, eastern and often wise, but primarily he was a professional and disciplined thinker, respectful of significant ideas wherever he encountered them. Philosophically, he strove for a standpoint which would give him a perspective on both traditions, western and eastern.

MALLIKEAN IDEAS IN GRAVES' POETRY

It is generally agreed that at Oxford, Graves, whose received weltanschauung had been shattered by the Great War, was in search of a new principle to both understand his world and cure his "neurasthenia". When poetry at first, escapist or otherwise, failed to relieve Graves' nervous condition, he turned to psychology and then to philosophy. Armed with the insights gained through these disciplines, he returned to poetry and finally arrived at an original statement based in myth.

In Graves' early poetry, written before he met Mallik, he had already toyed with certain philosophical ideas and studied the metaphysical poets. A primary problem which engaged his attention was the phenomenon of opposition or contrariety, as manifest in the conflicts within the psyche of the individual or in life situations between people. He believed that opposition, which he and Mallik both viewed as the stuff of reality, could be overcome by Love. For example, in *On English Poetry* (1922) he writes "Art of every sort, ... is an attempt to rationalize some emotional conflict in the artist's mind." He gives as an example the painter of a still life, who "has felt a sort of antagonism

between the separate parts of the group and is going to discover by painting on what that antagonism is founded..." (*On English*, 42) Or, quoting himself from *Country Sentiment* on the Janus-faced God of Poetry:

> Then speaking from his double head
> The glorious fearful monster said,
> "I am Yes and I am No
> Black as pitch and white as snow;
> Love me, hate me, reconcile
> Hate with love, perfect with vile,
> So equal justice shall be done
> And life shared between moon and sun.(*On English*, 62)

Graves was also in search of a new basis for morality and for a new truth to replace religious truth. As he wrote in *Good-bye*, he was attracted to Mallik whose intellectual and ethical position corresponded with his own:

> (Basanta) believed in no hierarchy of ultimate values or the possibility of any unifying religion or ideology. But at the same time he insisted on the necessity of strict self-discipline in the individual in meeting every possible demand made on him from whatever quarter and he recommended constant self-watchfulness against either dominating or being dominated by any other individual. This view of strict personal morality consistent with scepticism of social morality agreed very well with my practice. (403-4)

McKinley has argued that "the poems preceding Mallik's coming already signify a growing sense of the relativity of human existence" and that "Graves' friend merely heightened the poet's appreciation of individualism, his disbelief in 'ultimate values'" (McKinley, 111-2). In fact, Graves would have been reassured by Mallik's theoretical confirmation and systemization of his nascent beliefs and disbeliefs. Both men believed in the possibility of certainty and truth which they could not find in the traditional absolutes. Neither despaired, but accepted the human condition of less-than-absolute belief, each in their separate ways and strove to record certainty as they found it.

For Graves, the conflicting opposites exhibited fleeting moments of

fusion and truth—which might be described as the identity of opposites, a view to which Mallik had inclined during their days together. Mallik's insistence on the equal and incomplete nature of all world views, on the equality and importance of all individuals as the prime components of reality, struck a chord of resonance in Graves, who had been jolted out of his received religious and social presuppositions. Thus he was predisposed to accept Mallik's particular philosophical theorization on these and other issues and to adopt his terminology. Philosophical ideas dominate many of the poems included in the latter half of *Whipperginny* (1923), the Introductory Letter to *The Feather Bed* (1923) *Mock Beggar Hall* (1924) and also *Welchman's Hose* (1925).

Since Graves' "Mallikean" poetry has been comprehensively dealt with by other scholars, we may look at just a few representative poems out of the oeuvre of that period, including "Mock Beggar Hall: A Progression", "The Lord Chamberlain tells of a Famous Meeting" and "Interchange of Selves". Lastly, we will examine The Towering Wave, a literary-philosophical book by Mallik published in 1953 containing echoes of his exchanges with Graves.

In most of Graves' philosophical poems, Mallik's ideas, or their shared philosophical concepts, have been inserted rather baldly into the poetic text, indicating Graves' struggle in assimilating the new categories. At times the process of mutual abstention receives a mechanical formulation, as also the equality of opposition, which easily, and perhaps intentionally on the part of Graves, reads as simple relativism. Such are the verses in *The Marmosite's Miscellany*, which contain the following lines: "Between good and evil I strive not to judge. ... Wherever there is conflict , all sides are wrong" (12). In "The Bowl and the Rim" (*Whipperginny*), however, Christ and his persecutors are subjected to a more sophisticated Mallikean critique:

> If they did wrong, He too did wrong,
> (For love admits no contraries)
> In blind religion rooted strong
> Both Jesus and the Pharisees.

Both stand for positive ideas—Christ teaches "Love all men as thyself", and the Pharisees, justice between men, even between men and animals. But Christ's commandment is unfortunately accompanied by an implicit injunction to "only loathe a Pharisee" and the Pharisee's justice by the cry to "crucify this demagogue". This poem more subtly

brings out the conflict between Good / Evil and Good / Evil, or the non-absolute nature of value (64).

"The Introductory Letter" to *The Feather Bed* uses a version of Mallikean philosophy to interpret the Judeo-Christian revelation. Here, Graves calls God, the creator of the human race in its most primitive phase, Saturn. He is succeeded by Jehovah, who presides over Eden, the scene of "the birth pangs of a new civilization", which is achieved by creating social order through morality. God splits into Good and Evil (the social good versus the old Adam), and this God rules us still. Graves uses God as emblem for tyrannical tradition suppressing the individual. His portrait of Lucifer, the Light-Bringer and God of the future, is clearly of Mallik: "...only a weakling as yet, the hope of eventual adjustment between ancient habits and present needs. ... *As the spirit of reconciliation, Lucifer puts out of date the negative virtue of Good fighting with Evil, and proposes an Absolute Good which we can now conceive of as Peace. The doctrine of mutual responsibility for error, and of mutual respect between individuals, sexes, classes, groups, and nations*, a higher conception than the eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth doctrine of Jehovah, is Lucifer's" (italics added) (*Feather*, 7). Mallik was also concerned with the conflict between the traditions of Europe and Asia which are synchronic, (and of which the diachronic view is Eurocentric).

"Mock Beggar Hall: A Progression" is in the collection of that name, in which Graves had exultantly written to Sassoon that he and Mallik were setting forth a new metaphysics. The bulk of the poetry is philosophical, and the two most obviously Mallikean pieces are "Interchange of Selves", on which both collaborated, and Graves' "Mock Beggar Hall", though there are numerous others including "Knowledge of God". Here again the contrast and opposition is between the successive values of the past and the present with a hint of equality between them. The Philosopher in "Mock Beggar Hall" suggests that "Human relationships can be conducted according to a different system that is mutual abstention from conflict when conflict is recognized as obtaining, and a positive faith that the very fact of abstaining and endurance will introduce a new element to solve existing differences" (76). And the Poet adds that between "the traditional view and the view that we are holding there is no conflict" (76). Internal conflict is also to be handled in a similar fashion as, for example, in the case of the landlord who decides not to identify with either conflicting side, but wait for a new state of mind to emerge. This

resembles certain meditation techniques, which withdraw identification with obsessive thoughts to create the space in which the creative mind can function.

In *Welchman's Hose* there are two poems, "A Letter from Wales" and "The Clipped Stater", which contain lines echoing Mallik's formulations pointing to a richer and more successful assimilation of philosophical ideas. In the former we find:

> And I remember that we looked and found
> A region of the sky below the dragon
> Where we could gaze behind all time and space
> And see as it were the colour of pure thought,
> The texture of emptiness, and at that sight
> We came away, not daring to see more:
> Death was the price we knew, of such perfection; (35-6)

Graves' insight on pure thought and emptiness behind time and space borders on the mystical, and he characteristically recoils from pursuing the experience further, due to his (mistaken) association of emptiness (like the Buddhist nirvana) with death. We may compare the above lines with those in Mallik's Oxford thesis which describe indeterminate reality as "beyond all knowledge", incapable of being described in terms of Space or Time or Ether or Electrons (*Freedom*, 39). Mallik also refrained from introducing mystical thought into his metaphysic, not out of fear of death, but because having declared indeterminate reality to be real but beyond all knowledge, he focused purely on determinate reality as the proper subject of philosophy.

"The Clipped Stater" speaks of infinite possibility and purpose, / which must embrace, *that it can be confined*." "The Finity is true Godhead's final test, / Nor does it shear the grandeur from Free Being" (*Welchman's*, 41). This echoes Mallik's notion that determinacy is not a limitation on freedom, as in the following extract from his unpublished thesis,

> Positively, (Indeterminate Reality) has infinite possibilities. There is no possibility which is not open to it; neither is any possibility binding on it. ... the notion of contingency is equally implied by it but not its limitations. ...The *Free Being can be unfree and limited,* can undergo every form of limitation, but it cannot be free and unfree at the same time; (*Freedom*, 38-9) (italics added).

"The Lord Chamberlain" poem, from *Whipperginny* (1924), is not generally classed as one of the Mallikean poems, perhaps because of its successful, hardly noticeable ingestion, unlike in his other poems, of the mood of individual and civilizational equality which underpinned Mallik's viewpoint on conflict, abstention and harmony. It is also a poem that has been positively assessed on literary grounds. The action described is minimal: two princes of the East and West meet in the course of their espionage missions in the camp of the hostile Middle Kingdom, play cards for half an hour, then go their separate ways. Here is a classic situation between East and West, which before the Cold War when the poem was written, referred to Europe and Asia. The encounter between East and West is prefigured in a real-life meeting arranged by Graves between two of his "princely" friends—an Occidental soldier and an Oriental philosopher (obviously Mallik), whom he believed to share much in common (*Unreason*, 13-6). In the poem, where real life transmutes into poetry, the representatives of East and West meet in a "hostile" Middle Kingdom, perhaps a symbol of middle-class Philistinism (This thought is echoed in "To 'M' in India"). In the course of their game of cards, an exchange takes place: East smiles a radiant and illuminating smile, indicative of an instantaneous and wordless understanding, which is received and confirmed by West. Later East buys from the latter several cultural items—ballads, histories and songs for dancing. Their conversation is casual, but the Chamberlain narrator, who has described himself earlier in the poem as East's man, records that both understood that this "chance meeting stood / For turning movement of world history" (47).

The relationship between the two players is one of strict equality, the sine qua non of harmony according to Mallik. They meet with mutual respect, dignity and restraint. Graves devotes a few lines to this aspect:

> One thing is true, that of all the sights that I have seen
> In any quarter of this world of men,
> By night, by day, in court, field, tavern, or barn,
> That was the noblest, East encountering West,
> Their silent understanding and restraint,
> Meeting and parting like the Kings they were
> With plain indifference to all circumstance; (47)

The manner of meeting suggests the depth and quality of understand

ing between Mallik and Graves; it is conducted within an ambience of civilizational equality. Mallik had traded a few items from the West—some academic degrees, some literary and historical understanding in return for philosophic insights. His recent departure for India would have occasioned the theme of meeting and parting. The poem is written in a mood of tranquil reflectiveness, not yet exhibiting the pain of separation and loneliness which marks "To 'M' in India", published in *The Marmosite's Miscellany* a year later, following the deaths of Sam Harries and George Mallory. It might even have foreshadowed the future parting of their ways, which was to commence with the arrival of Laura Riding. Its omission from Graves' later (post-1926) editions of his Collected Poems, despite its quality, is understandable in the light of his desire to efface all that was a reminder of their days together.

Mallik entrusted Graves with all the editorial details of "Interchange of Selves" (included in *Mock Beggar Hall*, but reprinted from *The Winter Owl* of 1923), asking only that the broad scheme be respected. The "actionless drama" takes place in the surrealist setting of a Nepal rainforest, within walking distance of "a small town, noted for its learning where students come from distant parts of the world to taste its wisdom and leave their own mark on it after tasting"—Oxford. The three characters, Mysticus, Practicus and Liberalis recount their convictions, their indignation at being confronted with contrary beliefs, and their eventual depression at their failure, when faced with the extremities of survival, to live up to their professed philosophies. This is not an exercise in sheer relativism, as McKinley has pointed out, for during the post mortem when Mysticus concludes that we are ruled by caprice, and Liberalis that we are pawns on a chessboard, Practicus, speaking for the author, counsels that *caprice should be categorized as evil and resisted, even though good and evil are relative terms*. Thus even while ruled by whim, "the caprice-laden moment must live only to die" (56). This recalls Tommy Harries' description of a dinner party at the Golden Cross recorded by Collingridge, when Mallik "talked more magnificently than ever, standing by the mantelpiece." He said, "I have taken Caprice out of the hand of God and placed it in the hand of man" (Collingridge). This conviction that man is master of his own destiny developed alongside another, that underlying the differences between good and evil or right and wrong is a lasting thread of truth which somehow binds and underlies the conflicts. Mallik was consistently rational and moral and believed that all exigencies of life could be met with responsibility and truthfulness. He did not subscribe to

the Vedantic doctrine of illusion or *maya*.

Later, Graves was to dismiss his philosophical poems as a mistaken digression from the path of true poetry, and critics also, with a few exceptions, find them arid and uninteresting. Graves penned his comments during the Laura Riding years and wrote as though his new "stage" of writing and thinking had completely superseded the earlier. However, Seymour-Smith feels that philosophy, Mallik's in particular, helped Graves to come to terms with what he was wont to call the "goddawful world", and McKinley writes that although Graves'

> foray into reason, ... produced fewer memorable poems, it sharpened his descriptions, tightened his diction, stripped the past sophomorisms from him, and brought him to a full appreciation of detachment, verbal calm, irony, stoicism, and the celebration of the ephemeral but timeless moment when complicated phenomena are understood. (McKinley, 111)

Mallik never spoke of any influence Graves might have had on him, nor did he write any memoirs. However, it is interesting to speculate about his response to poetry about which Graves had written to Sassoon. Even before he met Graves, Mallik had enjoyed several friendships with poets, so he could hardly have suffered from a "loathing" for poetry. In *Poetic Unreason* Graves records that his Indian friend "is most sensitive to the implications and suggestions of the poetry of his own country" (34). One may look for hints of the quickening of Mallik's poetic expression in some of his non-scholarly prose. "Interchange of Selves" is, of course, a joint effort—Englished, as Graves writes, by himself. R. P. Graves has suggested that Robert wrote it all himself: the language, indeed, is unmistakably his, though not necessarily the substance. Rather, in *The Towering Wave*, a literary allegorical work published nearly a decade and a half after their break-up, certain themes repeat themselves. (Mallik felt that "allegory" was not a good description of what he had written, but since he found no substitute word, we continue its use, however inadequate). Mallik's literary prose is stylistically Bengali, romantic and colourful, occasionally repeating words to denote intensity or vastness—a characteristic of most Indian languages. L.A.G. Strong on the dust jacket, describes it as writing of "freshness and beauty", "a story full of imagery, ...(showing) how each nation's attempts to make peace is bound to obtain the opposite result ..." and describes the philosophy

of Mutual Abstention as "a non-violence of the mind, that withdraws force from man's impulse to self-aggrandizement."

The themes which recall "Interchange" are those of travel, dreams and nightmares, but to these are added a vision and a pilgrimage which ultimately lead to a resolution. In a letter to Strong, Mallik gave an unusual account of his own creative processes, as well as a synopsis of the book and its significance. The story begins with a dream:

> The last towering wave behind the dam gradually sloped back into the trough with boiling rage in green, black and white and the dam stood throbbing like a vessel which has just weathered the last blow from the heaviest sea. The sigh of relief which unmistakably greeted the dam was heaved as if by the whole earth surmounted by the sky. Will the dread wave come back, will the trough boil over again and urge the wave to rise and bend the dam to its knees? This cry flooded the whole horizon. (Letter from Maillik to Strong, October, 1953)

The dream shifts to the classrooms of the university, where the riddle of the dam is dismissed by the Professor as irrational. But soon war is declared, the students are trained to murder and destroy, in which they acquit themselves well enough to receive commendations. After the peace, they return to the classrooms, to "normal" life. Here the dream ends.

But now a "tale about the dream" makes the rounds, creating much uncertainty and anxiety.

In his letter to Strong, Mallik explains that the dream at one time spread over the whole human community, like a collective delusion. The Professor's scepticism arose over the difficulties in distinguishing facts from dreams. Dreams can be questioned even inside dreams, so the Professor can be seen as a personification of the whole human community.

> But the curious part of the book is the tale about the dream. I do not for the life of me know why I introduced the notion of a tale. It simply haunted me for months, especially when I found that what have been known as tales of human history could not be avoided as sheer fantasies even if the dreams were.
>
> ...The conclusion of the first part, therefore, seems to be that the

> whole of the human community up till now has been dreaming. It was absolutely under the influence of illusion. Here is an interpretation of history according to my philosophic position set in the form of images. (letter from Mallik to Strong, October, 1953)

The next phase of the story concerns the search for an explanation, for which a group of persons constitute themselves into a "pilgrimage". The Voices which speak to them in the language of tradition and dogma are angrily rejected. They continue their search, finally facing a night of violent storm reminiscent of the storm in "Interchange", with this difference that the shouts and cries they hear are not human but supernatural. The pilgrims are terrified, and a few prepare to flee the scene. The morning after this crucial 'trial by storm' a section of the group resolves to respond to these experiences by taking their destiny into their own hands. They opt for self-reliance and responsibility. As Mallik explains: "... the second part ... embodies the fact that the pride of illusion was suddenly met by the appearance of vision which was not illusion, but fact or Truth" (letter from Mallik to Strong, October, 1953).

The third part, writes Mallik, "...(builds) up an imaginary picture of what was bound to follow the vision; one may call it prophecy" (Mallik to Strong, October, 1953). This is done through the new group of pilgrims transformed into the "Search", whose main spokesman is the Philosopher, (now a mouthpiece for Mallik as the articulator of Truth and no more the representative of human illusion). Its members evolve a code of abstention through their encounters with various other groups such as the Peace Movement, refugees from war and natural disasters, scholars. The Western states approach the Search for help in reaching an understanding with the Eastern, but the Search resolves to remain outside the conflict, particularly *as their own understanding is not advanced enough to suggest an immediate solution*. They request exemption from military training. Their arguments and demeanour win over the delegates of the West who join the Search. A gang of toughs tries to physically threaten them: the Search, recognizing that they must have unwittingly provoked the aggression, respond with consideration, and the diehards retreat.

The story, illustrating Mallik's philosophical and ethical ideas continues through discussions about history, economics, justice, philosophy, till it reaches in the end a reassuring finale. Its roots in "Interchange" are clearly visible.

SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESSES IN THE MAKING AND ENDING OF A FRIENDSHIP

The intense and intellectually exciting friendship which blazed up between Graves and Mallik was quite an extraordinary phenomenon for its time. As Graves confesses, none of his inherited contempt for the obsequious colonial Indian surfaced with Mallik, and they could meet as princes of East and West. Their shared ideas and ideals have found poetic expression in "To 'M' in India" from which we may quote at random:

> In India you
> Exiled at your own home as I at mine,
> Aghast at the long cruelty of tradition
> At so much pain yet to be harvested
> With the old instruments...
>
> You with no ambition
> As I have none, nor the few friends we share,
> Except this only, to have no ambition;
> With no sure knowledge but that knowledge changes
> Beyond all local proof or local disproof; (*Marmosite*, 5)

In the course of this dialogue of heart and mind, apart from the strength and reassurance he was able to provide to the troubled Graves, Mallik enlarged the mental horizons of his friend to a sympathetic vision of the world's cultures, their repetitious history of conflict, and the possibilities for a more peaceful future, much of which found its way into Mock Beggar Hall. In various poems we find Graves striving to empathize with the cultural and societal nuances of Indian life under British imperialism, with references to Plassey, General Dyer and Gandhi. For his part, Mallik was entranced by this highly gifted companion who so eagerly and enthusiastically responded to him. Mallik himself was charming, handsome, an engaging conversationalist, an original thinker, and like all formulators of new ideas, looking for the kind of confirmation and acceptance he received so generously from Graves. He was also very warm and affectionate and obviously delighted in the company of the young Graves family. He would speak afterwards of the wobble of his bicycle at the crossroads which would decide whether he turn right for Islip or return home to Farndon Road. He hoped with friends like Graves (who

echoed similar sentiments in *Good-bye*, that the survivors of the recent war should do their best to avoid wars in the future (*Good-bye*, 281)) that he could establish a new philosophical perspective which would actually result in the cooling of conflicts and pave the way for new visions of harmony within and between individuals, nations, groups and cultures. This collective endeavour could not immediately be fulfilled, as Mallik had to return to India; death snatched away Harries and Sydney Lewis, and Graves turned away from philosophical pursuits.

In India Mallik got mired in the existential problems of the unemployed and was unable to sustain an adequate level of interactions with Graves, ("few letters pass between us" (*Marmosite*, 5)). With the departure of other friends like T.E. Lawrence and the death of George Mallory on Everest in 1924, Graves was lonely and unhappy until he met Laura Riding in 1926; she evoked other aspects of his poetic personality. By 1929 he wrote in *Good-bye* that his friendship with Mallik gradually failed, as "India re-absorbed him, and we changed" (*Good-bye*, 405). India had absorbed Mallik only externally, in the way the flood of her complexity does to any struggling individual. Intellectually he remained independent and unconventional, for which he paid the price of being misunderstood in his own country. Graves, on the other hand, went through quite cataclysmic experiences, both in his intellectual and personal life, which were to result in *his* being re-absorbed into Europe:—not the Europe into which he had been born and nurtured, but a more modern Europe (His self-conscious pursuit of an alternative to the modern patriarchal, rationalist, technological society is an equally "modern" or "post-modern" phenomenon). With the departure of Mallik, he abandoned the extra-civilizational perspective they had tried to cultivate together and returned single-mindedly to a personalized individualism, narrowed even further to a particular truth function as a Muse poet.

In the autumn of 1936, Mallik returned to Europe in better circumstances, but Graves refused to meet him, or, it was rumoured, to return the hundred pounds which Mallik is supposed to have earlier lent him. Mallik made several attempts to reach him through letters, even through an intermediary, Ethel H(erdman), in 1937 (*Years*, 281). It is possible that Laura Riding was instrumental in preventing a meeting (she had tried the same with regard to Liddell Hart but failed). But there are also hints in Lewis' biography that Graves had been hurt at the "neglect" shown him in the intervening years and wrote "discor-

dant and accusing letters" to that effect. Mallik owned his responsibility, making no attempt to excuse himself as he might have, in view of the very real difficulties which he himself had experienced in India, but "stood back", leaving the door open for a change of heart. The end came in 1938, when a relative angrily wrote to Mallik requesting him to refrain from trying to "dominate Rob", after which he abandoned any further attempts to resume contact (Lewis, 49). Riding is often held to blame for spoiling Graves' relationship with Mallik, but even after her departure, once Graves started his more secure and stable life with his second wife and resumed some of his interrupted friendships, he made no effort to contact Mallik, who was by then settled at Oxford. Mallik accepted the new situation, and dropped Graves' name from his early associates mentioned in the Introduction to *The Real & the Negative*, published in 1940. Correspondingly, the 1957 edition of *Good-bye* excised all references to Mallik. Mallik never breathed a word of reproach against Graves, and Graves maintained a silence on their relationship, un-personing Mallik out of his life and writing. However, when his permission was sought to reprint the poem on Mallik in the commemorative volume after the latter's death, he gave his consent. The best interpretation would be that he withdrew or abstained (unilaterally) from what became for him an unacceptable situation, and in the manner of his so doing, paid his last philosophical tribute to Mallik.

There are, however, a few clues indicative of Graves' changed attitude towards India and Asia (the "East") which could provide the rationale for his rejection of Mallik. In early 1936, (i.e., a few months before Mallik returned to England), Graves had written a letter to Liddell Hart in which he described three people who think, in his special sense of the term (O'Prey, 264-5). The first two are T.E. Lawrence and Mallik, both of whom according to Graves, had stopped thinking, for different reasons. The third is Riding, who continues. (This was no doubt Riding's view). There is a note of wistful disappointment in this comment on both friends, which was accompanied by a short biographical note on Mallik. The reason Graves gave in this letter for Mallik's supposed cessation of thought was that "His thinking, (however) was *Indian*, and it led to a *standstill*" (italics added). After Mallik left Oxford in 1923 and until Graves met Riding in 1926, Graves had continued to express their shared philosophical ideas in his prose and poetry. Since they had all but lost touch, he could hardly have known of Mallik's subsequent philosophical development and was in no posi-

tion to judge in 1936, before the publication of Mallik's first book The Individual & the Group, whether or not he had reached a "standstill". The remark is thus more analytic than empirical, if not autobiographical, signifying Graves' own experience of stagnation which succeeded his "neurasthenia". The common paradigm within which they had interacted might well have been appropriated by Graves as "Eastern wisdom" through the lens of his own assumptions and requirements. This very personal appropriation, suggested in "The Moment of Weakness", epilogue to *The Marmosite's Miscellany*, was then projected on to Mallik:

> The too-large hearted gale
> That stript our tops of sail,
> That havocked yards and deck,
> Driving us half in wreck
> Seven hundred miles at least
> On our set course, due East,
> Has dwindled to a breeze
> And failed in sunny seas,
> Leaving us, none too soon,
> To enjoy this quiet temperate noon
> And quiet sleep, past hope,...
>
> Eat, drink and be not wise.

After he had sorted out his problems relating to "the antithetical nature of thought and experience", to religion and God, to conventional morality and to individualism, the poet in Graves sought new forms of expression. He now stridently asserted that only Muse poets can know truth—he totally dismissed the philosophic enterprise. The one-line definition of "thinking" in Graves' letter, which he warned was inadequate but which is all we have to go by, is that it "implies a complete unification of the mind, and the person along with the mind" (Incidentally, this reads as an excellent description of Mallik, in terms of his own philosophy). In time, Graves was to make positively derogatory references to philosophers, and he mockingly describes one of the tribe imprisoned in a dank prison cell, "Threading a logic between wall and wall, / Ceiling and floor, more accurate by far / Than the cob-spider's ... In which the emancipated reason might / Learn in due time to walk at greater length / And more unanswer

ably" (*Collected*, 136). Mallik never ceased to look upon philosophy as crucial in the immediate present for analyzing and dissolving inherited conflict-prone habits of mind and action. But once the peace which abstention would engender was secured worldwide, philosophy, which is primarily a response to problem, would become redundant, and the imagers, through poetry, art and music, would assume the task of envisioning the world of the future, leading to the final direct experience of reality. Thus Mallik found no essential antagonism between poetry and philosophy. These ideas were more clearly developed in the fifties.

More significant is the reason Graves adduces for Mallik's "standstill"—it came about because his thinking was Indian. Graves' friendship with Lawrence did not "fail" despite the fact that in his eyes, Lawrence also had ceased to think. Graves' fateful meeting with Riding had led to or coincided with his (intellectual) return to a purely European haven, if not into Eurocentricism, from which "Indian" thinking might be dismissed as incorrigibly self-enclosed and static. In *The White Goddess* (1948), Graves mainly focused on the pre-patriarchal religions of Britain and the Mediterranean. He evolved an individual, even idiosyncratic type of personal credo, meant to herald the dawn of a new religion for the western world, which would reconcile the great divide between Satan/Lucifer and Christ as the twin sons of the Goddess, and by restoring Her eminence in the pantheon usher in an era akin to pre-classical matriarchy.

He found it important towards the end of this study to express impatience with "fashionable" talk of political reconciliation between Far East and Far West (*White*, 483). Graves held Sir James Fraser's statement, in which he attributes the defects of European civilization to "the selfish and immoral doctrine of Oriental religions which inculcated the communion of the soul with God, and its eternal salvation, as the only objects worth living for" to be historically incorrect (according to him, the "salvationist obsession of the Greek Orphics was Thraco-Libyan, not Oriental"), but not far from the truth. Elsewhere, he refers critically to "Eastern" patriarchalism, introduced by the Indo-Europeans, which overran the matriarchal cultures of the Mediterranean (38-39) (The Indo-Europeans or Aryans were in those days believed to have originated in the Caucasus region, spreading westwards and eastwards to reach Europe and India). He berates Aldous Huxley, a convert to Ramakrishnaism, for advocating India as a guide to the "rigorous discipline of asceticism", when he might have

been equally well served, Graves argues, by selecting a director from the western mystical tradition. He approves of Kali, who, according to him, is a white goddess, although she is iconically black, (perhaps he found her characteristics "white"). This serves as the prelude for his misconceived castigation of Ramakrishna for his supposed betrayal of the Goddess. Indeed, his description of samadhi as a "psychopathic" condition, or "spiritual orgasm" only echoes the orientalist stereotypes of the day. Graves' annoyance with Huxley for seeking spiritual inspiration outside of western civilization is surely an incongruous sentiment for a devotee of the universal Goddess, but points to the battle-lines now drawn in his own mind about the "east" and "west". Alarm at appropriation by strange cultures is natural: Mallik himself advocated respect for others' viewpoints and abstention from expansion of one's own. Graves' irritation and dismay ironically recall those of his own family's at his friendship with Mallik: indeed, there is good reason to believe that their estrangement, apart from personal misunderstandings, was rationalized in Graves' case in Kiplingesque terms.

Certain philosophic aporia both pre-dated and post-dated Graves' friendship with Mallik, to which he developed his own responses: the phenomenon of opposition, rejection of received tradition, the centrality of an appropriately conceived moral code. Peace, however, the focal point of Mallik's thought, probably came to signify for Graves as for many others, the derivative of a desirable state of affairs—in his case, a benefit ensuing from the establishment of a matriarchal society. As a poet committed to the truth of feeling, he continued to believe in the possibility of experiencing opposites as identical, narrowed truth to occasional moments of pure poetic intuition, and stressed the importance of tension and suffering to enable such experience of poetic truth. He upheld a cyclical view of history which enabled him to entertain the idea of the return of a matriarchal era. Mallik, on the other hand, remained a metaphysical thinker pursuing the truth of being, progressing beyond some of the Hegelian and quasi-Vedantic postures he had adopted in his Oxford thesis. He abandoned the notion of the absolute altogether and built his metaphysics on the intrinsic duality of opposition, with the proviso that whereas opposites cannot fuse, they can, in principle, be related harmoniously as complementaries. From such a viewpoint, it is possible that matriarchal forms may well return to challenge patriarchy, but this does not put an end to the seesaw of alternating domination. For that to occur, a relationship of equality between the two energies would have to be

recognized, and a method devised to harmonize them. Rejecting the notion of synthesis of opposites as illogical and illegitimate, Mallik developed the notion of intervals of confusion or stalemate between the alternating domination of opposites. Within the determinate universe, he saw a breakthrough from the seesaw of history through the ethics of mutual abstention which would obviate conflict between dichotomous absolutes, until as complementaries they could be brought ultimately to a harmonious culmination. He completely discarded the notion of suffering as a value, which is integral to Muse poetry and inherent in all traditions including modernity. In classifying modernity as another tradition, Mallik might be positioned as an early "post-modern" pluralist, but was not, as has been emphasized, a radical relativist. Operationally, he stressed the importance of respecting traditions, subsuming them within a larger paradigm of understanding, before making any effort to change or challenge them.

Looking at Graves' trajectory through Mallik's eyes, we might say he underwent an experience of radical scepticism as a result of the war, which propelled him away from the received tradition of Christianity and engendered a more objective look at the claimed exclusivity and superiority of European civilization. However, uncomfortable with this distance and intellectual detachment, he returned to a quest for existential religion, which he ultimately found in a kind of paganism. Mallik had opened for him a philosophic window, looking beyond received traditions, but left to himself, and reinforced by Riding's predilections, Graves preferred to look behind received European culture into an imagined and idyllically reconstructed pre-patriarchal past. His Mediterranean vantage point embraced Islam, Judaism and Christianity, always from his unique perspective, which in Mallik's schema meant that he related to two macro social schemes, the humanist and community, both of which form part of the European inheritance. The former, in particular, is radically opposed to the group schemes of Asia.

Seymour-Smith has suggested that Graves' acutely stressful war experiences aggravated underlying neuroses in his personality (Seymour-Smith, 76). Very likely they also activated anxieties linked to his ancestry. Graves liked to describe himself as "Anglo-Irish", but he had German blood from a maternal grandfather whose cultural influence and pedigree far outshone those of his Danish wife. Before the Great War, the family frequently vacationed in Bavaria, and in *Good-bye* Graves' account of visits to the country homes of his patri-

cian relatives suggest both pleasure and pride. Once at Charterhouse, however, much punishment lay in store for him for this German connection. He was tormented for being a "von Ranke". He learnt to physically defend himself and command respect, but writes that his years at Charterhouse were marked by a "forced rejection of the German in (him)" (*Good-bye*, 25). He had to handle this rejection alongside his deep affection for his mother. The problem, furthermore, did not end with public school. In *Good-bye* there are several references to misgivings in the minds of fellow soldiers during the War and to suspicion being attached to his mother as sister of the previous German Consul to London. He ever after described himself defensively and aggressively as "Anglo-Irish", refused throughout his life to study the German language, (though he claimed to naturally have "the sense of it" even through his broken German) and effectively cut himself off from the rich corpus of German literary, poetic, philosophical, and even pagan, tradition. Surely this is a matter of no small surprise in one who had, in Germany, "felt a sense of home in a natural way" and was otherwise so curious and catholic in his interests (*Good-bye*, 30).

It can be imagined how this anxiety stemming from his German ancestry began to trouble him on the battlefield, confronting his mother's countrymen and his own cousins. He had volunteered to fight to prove that he was as good an Englishman as any at Charterhouse, where he had been made to feel "compromised by his German blood"—and earned merit as a fine and brave soldier (Seymour-Smith, 31-2). He adopted a mask of studied casualness in *Good-bye* when referring to the fate of his relations in the War: "cousin Wilhelm—later shot down in an air battle by a school-fellow of mine"; Uncle Siegfried, killed as an officer of the Imperial German Staff, whose body was never found (*Good-bye*, 20-22). Several uncles and cousins fought on the other side, some brilliantly and well: cousin Conrad won a military decoration more rarely given than the Victoria Cross. Surely this was a very poignant situation for a young man, fond of his mother *and* of his maternal relatives.

In many respects, his fate resembles that of Arjuna, the peerless knight of the *Mahabharata*, hero of many battles, at times waged even against his covetous and unjust cousins. On the field of Kurukshetra, on the eve of the greatest and most decisive battle, confronting not only his hostile cousins, but also his loved uncles and gurus, a curtain is raised on the depths of his spirit. Overcome with trembling and anxiety, he tells Krishna that under no circumstances will he fight, for

he will not be held guilty of the murder of his relations, no matter what their crime or what benefit to himself. Krishna took eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Gita to explain the predicament to Arjuna and steady his resolution. We can imagine that Graves might have experienced a similar though unexpressed anguish, for he had no Krishna as confidante. Perhaps he never even admitted to himself what troubled him in his depths (*Assault*, 243). But as the Pandavas were permanently grieved at the terrible slaughter involving their kith and kin, ultimately renouncing their hard-won kingdom and retiring to Himalayan penance and death, Graves carried within him an unuttered grief over the murderous fratricidal war in which he had voluntarily participated. As an old man Seymour-Smith records, Graves continued to voice his guilt over having "murdered" Germans during the War, refusing to take the common-sense view of battlefield morals (Seymour-Smith, 567). His traumas would have operated at several levels: he was a patriotic Englishman, ready to lay down his life for his country (as were his German cousins for theirs); he braved the exigencies of trench warfare till wounds and shell-shock removed him from the battlefield. He was horrified by the carnage of war and the cynicism of the politicians who directed it; also guilty at having survived where so many others of promise and talent had been senselessly cut down. But at a very deep and human level, he was troubled by the natural taboos against shedding the blood of his "relatives". Graves had enlisted to fight not only out of a sense of patriotism, but for a very personal reason, to lay the ghost of his German ancestry. This would have called for a superhuman effort to "reject the German in him". Such anxiety may also have contributed to generating the type of ambiguous guilt which pervades *The Pier Glass* written during the days of his post-war neurasthenia.

The unsolved problem of his dual ancestry prevented Graves from claiming his full European parentage and heritage and further curbed any inclinations to more universal thinking. He chose to be an exile from England, which had become problematic for him on several counts. By contrast, Mallik, also exiled from his natural home through circumstance, not choice, strove to structure his worldview from an Archimedean point outside all traditions, which would enable both a moratorium on conflict and an ultimate reconciliation. Today Mallik's fullness of vision is coming into view, as the world gets both more interconnected and, in the immediate present, more fractious.

One may speculate that had Graves retained his association with

Mallik, he might have intellectually connected to a wider world, even to Germany, through Mallik's insightful analyses of the dynamics of civilizations and societies, and escaped from the mythological (in the Mallikean sense) compulsions that distort them. Having matured and found his true poetic vocation, he might even have resolved the perceived threat from philosophy as successfully as he had that from domesticity, and obviated his defensive self-classification and public reputation as a "minor poet" (*White*, 456). Conversely, Mallik's civilizational and historical theory would have benefited from Graves' more detailed and meticulous scholarship, and, in his turn, he might well have been spurred to more imaginative experimentation as in *The Towering Wave*.

Hopefully, future scholars working on Graves will no longer dismiss or devalue this relationship between the poet and one of the best philosophical minds that he encountered. Their acquaintance took place in the aftermath of a war that profoundly affected both their lives and thinking and that of countless others of that generation. Sarajevo has come to symbolize the pathological conflicts of the twentieth century, from the Great War to Yugoslavia. As Rushdie has written:

> I have never been to Sarajevo, but I feel that I belong to it, in a way ...
> There is a Sarajevo of the mind, an imagined Sarajevo whose ruination and torment exiles us all. That Sarajevo represents something like an ideal; a city in which the values of pluralism, tolerance and coexistence have created a unique and resilient culture. In that Sarajevo there actually exists that secularist Islam for which so many people are fighting elsewhere in the world. The people of that Sarajevo do not define themselves by faith or tribe, but simply, and honourably, as citizens.
>
> If that city is lost, then we are all its refugees. If the culture of Sarajevo dies, then we are all its orphans. (17-8)

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