Chapter 1

Introduction: Studying the Self in a semi-autobiographical author

Ruskin Bond was born to a British father (Aubrey Alexander Bond) and an Anglo-Indian (?) mother (Edith Dorothy) at Kasauli Military Hospital, in Himachal Pradesh, India, on May 19, 1934. It is instructive to mention at the very outset that I will be working with Ruskin's own sense of the self rather than any objective truth about his lineage or descent. He is unquestionably aware of his father being British but his dubious notion of Edith’s descent is the reason why I have assigned a question mark to his mother’s genealogical attribute. I will soon refer to this in greater detail. Before that, however, let me introduce the subject of the self/other dialectic – hinted at in the title of this study which seeks to deal with the author’s anxieties of identity.

Ruskin’s life (and, for that matter, his semi-autobiographical works) is an allegory of the colonial aftermath. For him India is an atmosphere where in his youthful days he overcame daunting rejection in order to work out a congenial absorption. Suitable absorption accommodates both integral and differential styles of living. It caters to “identity” formation in so far as the term refers to both similarities with and differences from (the) other(s). His is an odd but exemplary attempt at absorption of a member of a minority ethnic community whose role in the shaping of the postcolonial Indian psyche is not seriously addressed. This is an attempt to explore the dialogue between the biographical and authorial selves of the man whose subjectivity is informed by the
fantasies of space and time. That is not to say that I have set out to give a full-fledged account of the author’s actual life as it developed to the present day. Professor Meena G. Khorana has done that for us in her book *The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond* (2003) and so has Ruskin in his autobiographical works. I will be reading texts of Ruskin Bond, selected from across his writing career (he is still writing), in an attempt to diagnose the Anglo-Indian author’s psychic tensions in postcolonial India. I have used the term “postcolonial” to mark time right from British colonization of the country.

Ruskin’s early memories are those of quarrels between his parents and their ultimate estrangement. As long as his father lived he received more or less a British upbringing. His father’s demise when Ruskin was ten instilled in the boy a sense of insecurity, leaving him toggling between an adolescent life in the 1940s small town India and an Anglo-Indian milieu. He saw two microcosmic versions of the latter: one of his mother and stepfather, and the other of a caring maternal grandmother and her tenant, the elderly Mrs. Kellner. With his fair skin and blue eyes he was placed on the British side of the long colour scale that categorized the Anglo-Indians. Allied to this was his sensitivity to the suffering of his father, who fell victim to the cultural and political turmoil of colonial India. Aubrey served the Raj as a pilot officer in the Royal Air force (RAF).

The British presence in India gave birth to the Anglo-Indian community and indirectly fashioned its lifestyle. Ruskin’s parents came together in the course of a nightclub bash in a Mussoorie ghetto, but his mother’s hedonistic dissipations later in life drove a wedge between the parents and sent shock waves through Ruskin’s mind, from which he never recovered:
That early feeling of insecurity was never to leave me, and in adult life, when I witnessed quarrels between people who were close to me, I was always deeply disturbed – more for the children, whose lives were bound to be affected by such emotional discord (Memoir 3).

Reminiscing over his mother’s self-centred sensuality that prevented her from caring for the child’s emotional needs, Ruskin mourns as late in 1993 that “My mother’s sensuality was, I think, stronger than her intelligence” (Rain in the Mountains 245). In my reading of A Flight of Pigeons, in chapter five, I have shown how a historical character like Mrs. Labadoor in a fictional recreation is invested with the traits of an ideal mother, the absence of which Ruskin insufferably resented in his own mother. During a meeting with the author in October 1997, Ruskin told me that his parents separated due to their diverse lifestyles. His mother continued to be prodigal and a habitual frequenter of late-night drunken binges, which Aubrey did not like. This emotional trauma, thinks Ruskin, was compounded by the colonial overwork (evidences of which I have supplied in the analytical context of “Wilson’s Bridge” in the last chapter) in the sultry Indian plains to take a heavy toll on his father’s health. After repeated bouts of jaundice he died of cerebral malaria in Calcutta.

Ruskin passed the most impressionable days of his childhood and youth trying to come to terms with the ironical nature of his position. His attachment to his father makes him abhor the painful other (insofar as it is constituted of the tropical weather), as well as conscious of the fatal desire of the self to dominate the other. This split is further problematized by Ruskin’s residual Oedipality. His mother’s depravity was the cause of separation from her husband. When she chose to live with another man (Mr. Hari, Ruskin’s stepfather, was a Punjabi businessman), Ruskin, like Shakespeare’s Hamlet, unconsciously saw himself in the role of his father, repudiated and transplanted in the
sexual game plan. In their attempt to negotiate with a heterogeneous situation constituted of a "deviant" culture, and failing to come to terms with the empirical contingencies of colonial (over)work, which in reality contravened the "core doctrine" (Kedourie 2) of Western nationalism/rationalism, the Britons in India were psychologically lost to the professed values of "high culture". Ruskin ascribed his mother's degeneration to the effect of colonialism and considers it to be another cause of his father's suffering. He began to dislike the idea of colonialism and the doctrine on which it was founded. This is how desire for and abhorrence of the other endangered his self in a state of "dis-ease".

According to Partha Chatterjee, this psychological state of ambivalence also characterized the nationalist thought in India with, of course, a reversal of perspective of the status of the self and other. Ruskin, as a representative of his community, "the alien intruder and dominator" (Chatterjee 2), was rejected as the other while the culture of the other was adopted as a model for progress. The psychological dilemma that Ruskin faced and framed in his works is similar in nature to Indian Nationalist thought. Another problematizing factor was the politics of marginalization that worked drastically against the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European community in the wake of the Indian Freedom Movement. In 1947, there were some job reservations for the community, which acted as disincentive for young people of the community to aspire to higher education. The removal of reservations after independence jeopardized their condition. Jettisoned both by the mainstream British bandwagon and the Indian Nationalist clique, the Anglo-Indians turned into virtual flotsam of the Empire.

I have used the word "Anglo-Indian" to refer to both the inheritors of mixed blood (British and Indian) and the Britons in India, otherwise of pure descent, who yielded to
the cross-cultural influences of the colonized and the colonizer. Ruskin’s mother, Edith Dorothy, descended from a lineage that had evolved in India for a few generations. What Ruskin himself communicated to me in many a tete-a-tete I had with him evinces that his knowledge of his mother’s ancestry is poor and that he has a “vague idea” of himself having inherited racial hybridity. Meena G. Khorana, who refers to Ruskin Bond as an Anglo-Indian in the original sense of the term “to mean the British in India, and not its later official definition to describe people of mixed Indian and British descent” (Life and Works 21), traces his mother’s lineage to four generations of British residence in India. Ruskin’s maternal grandfather, William Dudley Clerke, was born to Charles and Louisa Clerke in a place which now belongs to Pakistan. William married Ellen Catherine Sims (his second wife) in 1902 and their daughters, Emily Alice, Gwyneth “Gwen” Helena, and Edith Dorothy (Ruskin’s mother) were all born in undivided (pre-Partition) India. Somewhere down the line, perhaps in the ancestries of Charles and Louisa Clerke or/among the forebears of Ellen Sims, a racial mixture could have taken place, the notion of which led Ruskin to call his mother’s eldest sister, Emily, an “Anglo-Indian”. In the autobiographical account of his experience of staying in his uncle’s (Emily’s husband) house in Jersey, he refers to the diary entries “in which I [Ruskin] had expressed my resentment over the very colonial attitudes that still prevailed in my uncle’s family. He was a South Indian Christian, my aunt an Anglo-Indian, and yet they were champions of Empire!” (Memoir 142) Ruskin appears to make slight distinction between the British in India and the Anglo-Indians in his Memoir:

The exodus of British and Anglo-Indian families was beginning even as the War ended. For some the choice was a hard one. They had no prospects in England, no relatives there. And they had no
prospects in India unless they were very qualified. For many Anglo-Indians and ‘poor whites’, assisted passages to England were the order of the day (Memoir 45-46).

It is obvious that he tries to classify ‘poor whites’ and “British” as separate denominations in relation to the “Anglo-Indians”. So when he calls Emily an Anglo-Indian, in a context engendered by the narrator’s anxieties of racial discrimination, he consciously invests the categorical nomenclature with not only a sense of cultural hybridity but racial mixture as well. However, the same account in which he categorizes his aunt and by implication his mother an “Anglo-Indian” in its distinctive sense, he supposes himself to qualify as a ‘poor white’ – ‘I suppose I qualified as a “poor white”’ (Memoir 46) – and includes the impecunious Mrs. Deeds and her son in the same category. Then he goes on to elaborate the Deeds’ condition in terms that echo the festering rancour of Anglo-Indians of mixed blood who were economically, culturally, and politically betrayed by the British since the latter’s commercial interests in India changed into imperial motives: “They were the flotsam of Empire, jettisoned by the very people who had brought them into existence” (Memoir 47). The discursive similarity between Ruskin’s framing of the Deeds’ situation and Frank Anthony’s rhetoric tracing the history of the racially mixed Anglo-Indians’ fate in the country is conspicuous:

Brought into existence deliberately by the British, used throughout British Indian history to serve and often to save British imperial interests, treated for the most part in a churlish manner, this comparatively microscopic Community, which has forged a not negligible, and in many respects, a notable history, was cynically betrayed by Britain before its withdrawal from India (Betrayal ii).

Ruskin’s conjuration of the imagery of the “jettisoned” “flotsam” is also markedly similar to the figurative language that Stephen Alter puts in the mouth of Theodore Augden, the “half-caste” Anglo-Indian narrator of Neglected Lives, to reflect on the
community’s travails in the end of the 1940s: “During the war there was a whirlpool in Europe which sucked us all into its madness. Then it spat us out like driftwood, twisted pieces of men” [Italics mine] (Leglected Lives 47). It seems problematic for Ruskin to try to make an objective differentiation between the Anglo-Indians and the Domiciled Europeans. A couple of reasons can be cited for this kind of confusion. The inclusivist definition of the term “Anglo-Indian”, as framed by the Government of India Act of 1935, made “all persons of European descent in the male line whether of mixed or allegedly of unmixed blood” (Anthony 4) belong to this category. The urge to forge an officially homogenized concept of the Anglo-Indian stems from a more or less pragmatic sociology of comparable bearings most of the European descendants in India at that point of time shared among each other. Codified ethnicity and its sociological verity worked in tandem to obfuscate Ruskin’s clear vision of the difference between Anglo-Indians of purely British blood and Anglos of mixed descent.

In the “Introduction” to The Flight of Pigeons (1980), a novel based on the historical findings of the persecution of an Anglo-Indian girl by the mutinous Indian sepoys during the uprising in 1857, Ruskin underlines the similarity between his position and that of the “14-year old girl [Ruth Labadoor] of mixed blood, who was caught up in the holocaust […]” Speaking about what had inspired him to write the book, Ruskin says:

The events described here took place in Shahjahanpur, a small district town in Uttar Pradesh. I felt drawn to Shahjahanpur because it was my father’s birthplace, and because my own family background was similar to that of Ruth Labadoor (“Introduction” Flight of Pigeons ).

Ruth’s father was killed by the marauding sepoys, and she and her mother were threatened by persecution. Her father’s life was sacrificed for the Raj, a symbol loaded with significance for Ruskin, whose father too died for the Raj in the oppressive
conditions of his work. Ruskin’s imagined identification with Ruth’s position is supplemented by a sense of alienation he suffered on a couple of occasions during his childhood when he had to confront nationalist ire in the form of invectives followed by physical assault. The sacrifice and loyalty the Anglo-Indian community displayed during the 1857 Mutiny helped them temporarily to win the favour of the Raj. Viceroy Lord Canning helped Dr George Cotton, the metropolitan Bishop in India set up schools for this community in line with the public school system of England. Ruskin’s father could afford to send his son to Bishop Cotton School in Shimla, but after Aubrey’s death Ruskin’s education was subsidized by the government’s grants-in-aid policy for some time. Eventually, he gave up formal education like many indigent Anglo-Indian children in India. Whether Ruskin actually has any Indian strain in his blood or not, he imagines himself an Anglo-Indian in both the senses of the term.

Ruskin’s usage of the phrase “Anglo-Indian” in the sense of half-caste to describe his aunt Emily could also have been motivated by his resentment at the duplicity practiced by Anglo-Indians in an attempted refutation of their Indian link. A desperate wish to demonstrate a purity of belonging to the mythical construct of a superior race engendered the psychic patterns of many Anglo-Indians during decolonization. Frank Anthony points out that the British offered indirect support to this tendency by exploiting the psychologically volatile racial sensibility of the Anglo-Indians. White Anglo-Indians – even if they had mixed blood in them - and those of colour were often meted out differential treatments: the former were inducted into respectable posts in the government reserved for pure Europeans while the latter were deprived of such privileges. In order to seek a clarification for the anomalous position of the Anglo-Indians, Henry Gidney, who
headed the Anglo-Indian Association prior to Frank Anthony, led a deputation to Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, in London in 1925. One of the members of the deputation explained:

If you have two brothers employed on the railway, sometimes the fair one will be employed as a European and the darker one as a Statutory Native of India, and the latter will not get the same privileges as the former (Quoted in Blunt, 43-44).

Colour acted as a decisive index for secret discriminations that British snobbery of racial purity discreetly employed. Ruskin’s critical attitude to such chicanery lends a postcolonial dimension to his identity-seeking concerns. His sympathetic notion of the Anglo-Indian is inclusivist enough to project his sensibilities in the white boy Rusty in The Room on the Roof, who is grudgingly guarded against the influences of Indianization by his British guardian John Harrison. When Rusty comes to know that he is half-caste, he finds psychological support for his prevalent inclination towards Indian life and culture. Harrison’s indignant tirade against the boy, calling him a half-caste “mongrel” in desperate rage over his own failure to circumscribe the boy’s identity in a “superior” racial bracket, is a self-reflexive critique of the British practice and the Anglo-Indian myth.

Ruskin’s narrative attempt to negotiate with the concerns of identity in the Memoir was published in 1997, before Meena G. Khorana ventured into a full-fledged objective investigation into the author’s lineage in 1999. When Dr Khorana’s findings were published in 2003, I asked Ruskin over phone whether his notion of having a racially mixed Anglo-Indian descent has undergone a change in the face of a biographical scholarship tracing his roots to pure British inheritance both on the paternal and maternal sides. He said, he has inherited German blood from his paternal grandmother and it does
not matter whether his mother had mixed blood or not, now that he has become able to live in India, write about it and enjoy the love of his adopted Garhwali family and the Indians. What matters, actually, is not the factual details of his racial purity, but the fact that for a considerable period of his life he followed a psychological course of dialogic relationship between his British and Indian inheritances — "whether of mixed or allegedly of unmixed blood". When in 2008 the All-India Anglo-Indian Association – the Indian chapter of the consortium for the racially mixed people – sought the author’s permission to enter his name in the catalogue of distinguished people of the community, he readily consented. An autobiographical writer, depending upon the memory of his past life for grist, Ruskin’s subjectivity is constantly informed by an unconscious play of dynamic alterity. It is the same anxiety that propels him to write: “Race did not make me an Indian. Religion did not make me an Indian. But history did. And in the long run, it’s history that counts” (At Home in India). It is a tongue in cheek comment, issuing from a desire to circumvent the controversies of racial and religious politics by foregrounding the importance of time and space in the formation of identity. As though, “race” and “religion” are not governed by the forces of history. The memories of socio-political discrimination that he suffered in India for being an Anglo-Indian underwrite his repressed concerns. He wishes to allay his anxieties by trying to signify defiance of the functional agencies of those parameters which become ironically active the more he attempts a symptomatic mastery of their inductive energies. Patrick Taylor, the Anglo-Indian railwayman in John Masters’ Bhowani Junction, says: “[W]e couldn’t go Home. We couldn’t become English because we were half Indian. We couldn’t become Indian, because we were half English. We could only stay where we were and be what we were”
Taylor’s sense of frustration stemmed from socio-economic insecurity and cultural liminality. In order to placate such discontent among the Anglo-Indians, another idea of “Home” was envisioned by the Colonization Society of India. Whitefield, off Bangalore, and McCluskieganj in Bihar (now in Jharkhand) came into existence as Anglo-Indian homeland and nation. Settlement in these places was promoted in terms of a nostalgic desire for home that was rooted in both Britain and India and sought to liberate Anglo-Indians both from British patronage and from Indianization. (Blunt 82)

Creation of such havens to satisfy disconsolate homing desires of Anglo-Indians was looked upon as colonization, because many inmates of these colonies “imagined themselves as part of a European – and often a British – community living within a wider imperial diaspora” (Blunt 105). Ruskin did not wish to belong to these diasporas; his sense of being Indian is projected in Rusty’s violent breach with his guardian’s communal designs and is forged in actual life in adopting a burgeoning Garhwali family and making a living independent of the socio-economic privileges of ghettoized existence. For him, “Home” is India. The stoic apathy of Taylor is supplanted by a sense of willful participation in Ruskin. For a nostalgic writer, nevertheless, the unconscious, which is shaped by the impressions of the experiences of negotiation between double inheritances, exerts a problematic but more discerning influence on Ruskin’s literary self. My analyses of his works seek to bring out the constant presence of this repressed anxiety and a psychological compulsion to dramatize the Self-Other dynamics as a symptomatic method to acquire a deferred conviction of identity. I would take liberty to call this the “historicity of the unconscious” insofar as the continuity of the dilemma can be traced in works as old as *The Room on the Roof* (1956) to *A Flight of Pigeons* (1975) to “Wilson’s Bridge” (1999).
According to Jacques Lacan, Freud’s twentieth century French disciple, in psychic development the infant’s mirror stage is a time when “the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power” (Ecrits, 2). In conformity with Lacan, whose psychoanalytic theory will be the tool of my interpretation, the later Ruskin is to be found already there in his early writings. He anticipates his maturity in childhood tensions. And since the past itself is based upon anticipation of the future, all present moments of his life are characterized by a temporal dialectic which I have already referred to as the historicity of the unconscious and will also elaborate below. Before resorting to analysis of the texts, let me briefly introduce Freudian-Lacanian hermeneutics and how I have employed it for my task.

Lacanian theory is founded on Freud. Some of the basic Freudian premises are accepted by Lacan while the others are problematized by him in an attempt to situate them in a non-humanistic site of the letter. In “The Signification of the Phallus”, Lacan observes “that Freud’s discovery takes on its value precisely in that it must have anticipated the formulas of modern linguistic analysis” (Ecrits 284). My reading of Ruskin’s texts is an attempt to reach the self through the signifying other. I have explored the connection among the referential (experiences in the author’s life), the intrapsychic function in fantasies and the interpsychic linguistic transference in texts of the unconscious that implicitly informs the author’s sense of identity. In most cases the experiential consciousness supplemented the growth of the unconscious which in turn influenced the intrapsychic and interpsychic functions in the author. That is not to say that the author’s distinctive strain is a literal mimetic representation of the real past, in most cases they are not. The conscious-unconscious debate entails a temporal dialectic in
fantasy structures which can be deconstructed. The psychic reality often separates from the reality principle to fulfill wishes or allay fears. For example, at the beginning of *The Room on the Roof*, the author invokes the image of the bicycle to cement a tie between Rusty and his Indian friends and allay the former’s fear of alienation when in reality the bicycle is a source of concern to Ruskin for reasons I have explained in the course of the analysis of the text in chapter three.

“Character analysis”, says Meredith Anne Skura, “provides a vital meeting place for psychoanalysis and literature” (33). Psychoanalytic interpretation will help locate a source for characters’ behaviour in the authorial unconscious, beyond their current experiences. The author creates an external scene for his hero so that he can invest a fantastic sense on his paranoia, just as Freud’s patients invented seduction scenes to rationalize their own desires: “My father made me do it”. I have tried to show how the Oedipal content in Ruskin’s attitude to his stepfather seeks to relate itself to an imaginary legitimacy in the creation of Rusty’s feelings towards his guardian in *The Room*. “The paranoid never thinks that anything is wrong with him; and in his fantasies, nothing is” (Skura 47). The character’s reaction to his immediate experience appears to be normal; but that it is shaped by an authorial angst which in verbal transference is rendered rational is what psychoanalytic pursuit of authorial identity as embedded in texts seeks to reveal.

In the very act of projecting the “desublimated desire” (Bersani, *Astyanax* 208) in the fictional character and setting, the author represses/sublimates the desire in the biographical self. As in the symbolic stage of psychic development, when the mother initiates the child to language and sets him on the course of independence by teaching him repression through signs, the author enacts the formulaic transference procedure
through literalization. It would be instructive to mention here that the self becomes dispersed in the entire narrative and "lies not in a locatable scene with characters, however wish-fulfillingly fictional, but in a nonspatial, temporal play between scenes, and even in a changing narrative stance" (Skura 57). Rusty's play between text and context explained in chapter three, the first person narrator's shifting relationship in *Time Stops at Shimla*, discussed in chapter five, and Pahari Wilson's oscillation between two worlds explored in the last chapter—all embody the "unlocatable" tension of the biographical self diffused across a network of intertexts. Ruskin's fictional scenes can be called, to quote Norman Holland, a "compromise of the mighty opposites of drive and defense" (Holland 53). The relation between the instinctual and repressive is located in the site of the fictional object as a correspondence between the embedded fantasy and manifest text. The correspondence, however, is problematic in the sense that fantasy structures are able to reshape the surface text into new patterns and reveal new emphases. By analyzing the fantasy structure inherent in Ruskin's autobiographical sketch "The Playing Fields of Shimla" in chapter six, for example, I have shown how the pathetic value assigned to the author's double, Omar, on the literal surface of the text is readjusted by the authorial fantasy of relief in the symbolic death of Omar. Psychoanalytic reading often points out counter structures in texts that in the manifest level suggest doubts about the nature of authorial subjectivity in the stories. It seeks to detect fantasies in the proliferation of scenes that affect not only the story or plot but the characters, the setting, the imagery and the language. A short story by Ruskin revolves around one primal fantasy but his novels spawn derivative fantasies as the plot journeys through scenes, revealing in its course wishes, fears, defenses and subjective versions of looking at
things. Fantasy is not a product of the adult mind but derives from what Lacan calls the imaginary stage of the child's absorption in his other (mirror image). That the mother often assumes the role of the other in the infant's imaginary is proof that this sort of narcissism is invested with a libidinal content which is both rewarding and punishing from the retrospective point of view of the Oedipal (Freudian) or the Symbolic (Lacanian) stage. Adult sexuality appears only in this later version of the fantasy, along with the distinction between the sexes, so that the different derivatives of the primal fantasy save the manifest text, if it depicts an adult world, from being completely reduced to a childish analogy. This is when the game metaphor is introduced. The consciousness of the self/other split characterizes the fantasy as a "play space", but the repressed desire for and fear of the other is mediated by the ego in opening up slips in transference exchange for the critic to negotiate with the playful fantasy of the text. The critic assumes the role both of an analyst and a patient. The dialectic between the author and the reader is governed by the text in a manner that presumptions of analytical knowledge of the authorial unconscious are thwarted by intersubjective role playing of the author and the critic. For Ruskin Bond, the author's assessment of the critic problematizes the latter's appraisal of the author. The thematic content of the interpretation and the transference condition of analysis work in dynamic relationship, so that the critic is allowed only to form a sort of diagnosis of the authorial unconscious in relation to his own unconscious urges. Any epistemological certainty of the authorial self is postponed. My analysis of Ruskin's texts seeks to diagnose the existential crisis embedded in them and does not presume to look beyond for any ontological truth. In the process, I will try to restrain as
much as possible the analyst’s unconscious from projecting into the text so that my attitude offers the subject “the pure mirror of an unruffled surface” (Lacan, *Ecrits* 2).

According to Lacan, the imaginary in the infant or in the repressed unconscious of the adult is made up of *imagoes* “which preferentially orients the way in which the subject apprehends other people” (Laplanche and Pontalis 196). Psychoanalysis attempts to recognize how the subject’s imagoes inform his relationships. In the imaginary stage, the infant in fragmentary helplessness identifies with the specular completeness of his mirror image. Jane Gallop, in *Reading Lacan*, notes the importance of the “temporal dialectic” of this moment which is “at once anticipatory and retroactive” (81). The infant jubilantly identifies with the wholeness of his mirror image and thinks he has already become what he will only later become. And it is only from the point of view of this completeness that his past appears fragmentary, albeit that past is his present in the same way as the future of his imaginary completeness is also his present. The present and the future inhere in the past.

Only by an effect of retroaction from the anticipated identifications do we understand that what happens in the mirror stage is the formation of a “rootstock”. What thus occurs in the mirror stage is the formation of what in the future will be an antecedent, what grammatically can be called a “future perfect”, the formation of what will have been a rootstock (Gallop 81).

When Ruskin sent Rusty to England at the end of *Vagrants in the Valley*, he himself had already returned to India from English exile. I will refer to this temporal dialectic in chapter three to elucidate the relationship between the author’s biographical time and the time of his fictional life. Meanwhile, it is instructive to point out that the infant does not experience this imaginary ideal only in an actual mirror, but seeks to find in the mother or someone assuming the role of the mother (“motherer”, according to Lacan) a care-giving
wholeness. She becomes the infant's mirror image, the other, with which the child desires an identifying fusion. It is partly the motherer's responsibility to initiate the infant into the symbolic stage of the letter by resisting his physical dependence on her through the instrument of language. The subject's desire for the motherer in the symbolic stage is thwarted by the alienating effect of the letter. The subject is now constituted by a domain outside him and independent of the subject. The linguistic site becomes the play space for the subject to be constituted and alienated; virtually an intersubjective order of "deferrance" is created where the subject becomes the object of another subject. This is how the relationship between the analysand and the analyst in clinical psychoanalysis and the author-text-reader relation in its literary counterpart comes into play. The libidinal drive of the imaginary stage, which appears to get repressed in the superegoic domain of the Symbolic, is the Freudian id. Lacan's exploration of the tripartite connection of the id-ego-superego posits ego as a false connector between id and superego, so much so that the ego in order to cover up the libidinal proclivities of the id connects such tendencies with superegoic constructs; or, in other words, the ego veils the id in symbolic transferences of desires. The ego comes into play at the narcissistic mirror stage, producing the misrecognition ("meconnaissance") of the self in its specular mirror image. The analyst or the critic presumes to unearth the role of the ego in the self/other dialectic of the text. The Freudian stage of psychical development corresponding to the Symbolic stage in Lacan is called the Oedipal where the superegoic role is performed by the child's father (or, a father figure, "fatherer") of legitimate cultural status. The prohibitive castration in the Lacanian stage is similar to the subject's castration by the letter. The ego performs a tropical role in language to disguise the anxieties of castration. That is why it
is possible to read in apparently innocuous metaphors the castrated equivalents of libidinal ennui. The critic diagnoses the crisis of authorial subjectivity in semi-autobiographical texts through literalized tropes of the unconscious; the text produces manifestations of transference. Ruskin Bond said that only the "gentle kind of person" is likely to care for his stories. Whatever notion ("gentle kind of person") the author as analysand maintains about the analyst as reader is likely to betray the analysand's imagoes.

Among the different forms of human behaviour that Freud points out to validate the concept of the unconscious, the workings of dreams and art are particularly relevant to our understanding of Ruskin's works. Dreams consist of "the transformation of a thought into experience" (Freud, *Dreams* 161). In most of Ruskin's fantastic tales and some of his realistic anecdotes his thoughts transform into literary experiences, the manifest content of which are influenced by his latent, unconscious desires. In order to understand the authorial concerns embedded in the fantasies and look for the desire hidden in the narratives, Freud suggests that the analyst should consider such works in the context of the dreamer's own life. The dreams in their literal translations assume disguise and censorship of four different kinds. There is the presentation of images. Then there is displacement in which important meanings appear only in a trivial or marginal form. Ideas are condensed and superimposed on each other. Finally, dreams are screened by the "alienating" device of the coherent language.

In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", Freud traces the origin of art to childhood, in the way the child plays. Instead of giving up the pleasures once enjoyed we form substitutes for them in adult lives. Freud's idea of pleasure, like Lacan's concept of
“jouissance”, includes a sense of pain as well, because pain causes surplus pleasure and makes libidinal drives economic. Rusty’s initial pain on being thrown into the gutter in *The Room* constitutes pleasure and Pahari Wilson’s attitude to Gulabi is moulded by desire (pleasure) and fear (pain) in “Wilson’s Bridge”. In my discussion of “The Eyes are not Here” in chapter four, I have explained how Ruskin displaces the memory of a pleasurable incident of his life in the condensed metaphor of the blind man’s game. Creative writers alter the self-concerned character of their “egoistic day-dreams” by presenting it in impersonal forms that yield aesthetic pleasure. The formal properties of art seek to veil desires inherent in such works by trying to create an internal core detached from external correspondences. Psychoanalysis renders the frame that divides the internal/external domains permeable.

The unconscious originates in infancy and our personality is primarily based on the impressions of our infancy and earliest youth. In the process of growing up there occurs an imperative split between the conscious and the unconscious so that the latter is actively excluded from the former. Lacan identified this split necessary for the existence of the human society. For the benefit of culture the anti-social drives need to be relegated to the realms of the unconscious. What needs to be renounced is the Oedipal drive which appears in the form of a threat of castration from the father. Castration is a threat to the genitals and not an actual process, so that the signifiers which represent castration take metaphoric forms like Oedipus’s voluntary blinding in Sophocles’s play. Freud asserts that it is similar to the fear of death and needs to be repressed in the unconscious. The repressed desire for the mother and its accompanying threat of castration (“death drive”) revive during adolescence and during paranormal conditions of adulthood.
This concept of repressive cultural normativity operates under a sacrificial logic of abjection. "The subject must abject, that is, define and exclude those things which threaten it" (Coats 8) culturally. Adolescence is a time when the Oedipal work accomplished in early childhood is revisited. Julia Kristeva defines adolescence as an "open psychic structure", a time of psychic reorganization where, "[i]n the aftermath of the oedipal stabilization of subjective identity, the adolescent again questions his identifications, along with his capacities for speech and symbolization" (Kristeva 9). This is a genetic phase when the subject suffers from a double bind between desire for and fear of the mother's body, posited between the imaginary and the symbolic. This is when the imaginary father intervenes lovingly in rescuing the child from merging back into non-identity. In the absence of the father, or/and in the presence of a social threat of corporeal fragmentation, the libidinal desire of the adolescent, revolving around the specular image of completeness (in strategic relation to the threat of fragmentation), gets excited. This expresses itself in symptoms of the "death drive" which needs to be repressed again lest it becomes a full blown disease. The appearance of the symbolic father to the adolescent child in his critical moment takes place in different sublimational forms. The multiple constituents of identity formation (in contrast to any reductively singular norm) are examples of such forms I have sampled in my discussion of Ruskin and Omar's friendship in the first part of chapter six.

Karen Coats cites instances of abject characters who suffer due to the absence of a proper family relationship. The role of the superego is either diffused or absent in their cases so as not to help them fully repress or sublimate their desires. Jerry Renault in Robert Cormier's *The chocolate War* is abject because his mother has died and his father
passed his days sleepwalking through life. In Anne Fine’s *The Tulip Touch*, Tulip is abject because his father is verbally abusive and mother is ineffectual. Tulip, however, grows more and more aggressive as his fiend Natalie rejects her friendship and instills a deeper sense of abjection in her. Natalie’s parents instruct their daughter to shun Tulip’s company in a manner in which Tulip turns out to be a foil for Natalie’s normal formation of subjectivity. “Reincorporation into adult society requires leaving such figures behind. It’s a parasitical move, but a self-preserving one, which makes it distasteful to theorize. It suggests that, in one sense at least, anyone who has successfully integrated into clean and proper society is complicit in the creation of abject figures” (Coats 151). Like Jerry Renault and Tulip, Ruskin Bond’s characters, Kishen, Rusty, Sunil (in “Death of a Familiar”) et al, are abjects who suffer from tensions of identification amidst a dynamic self/other debate. In case of these adolescent characters the double bind is intensely problematic till they retrieve a sense of belonging. Just as Natalie thrusts abjection on Tulip, Kishen’s assimilation into Dehra Dun society in *Vagrants* accentuates Rusty’s sense of abjection, for the riddance of which he sets out in search of paternal legacy. In “The Playing Fields of Shimla”, Ruskin enacts a metaphoric complicity in dispensing with his abject double, Omar. In fact, in the third and fourth chapters of the book, I have selected for analysis works in which both the narrated time and the narrating time encompass abject adolescence. Chapters five and six deal with works written in Ruskin’s adult life but engage with the time of the author’s own adolescence or are meant for consumption by young-adult readers. However, all the stories appeal to adult sensibilities anyway, insofar as they primarily engage in a temporal dialectic that engenders the
"historicity of the unconscious" at every moment of biographical life. Repressed desires unconsciously permeate adult consciousness, to curb which social laws are framed.

In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Claude Levi-Strauss considers the child's incestuous desire for the mother a taboo which can operate as a model for law, not because of its content, but for the fact that it proscribes a feeling that makes all the difference between nature and culture. Lacan cites Freud's discussion of the "fort/da" game to argue that it is language, the order of the signifiers, which performs the prohibitive act of castration when the infant develops into a speaking subject. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explains the game that his grandson used to play at the age of one-and-a-half. The infant had learnt a few words and how to play. Whenever his mother went away, he played with a wooden reel with a piece of string tied around it. He held the string and threw the reel into his cot. When the reel disappeared he made the sound "o-o-o-o", which according to his mother was the German word "fort" ("gone"). Then he pulled the reel back with a joyful "da" ("there"). This was the fort/da game which he "repeated untiringly". According to Freud, the infant is compensating for the loss when his mother goes away. By "staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach" (*Pleasure Principle* 285), he is trying to act out a drive for mastery over the loss. Lacan points out that words give the little boy a degree of control over his loss and at the same time castrates him by staging the very loss he is trying to deal with. In other words, he is initiated into the order of the symbolic which "manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing" (*Ecrits* 104). "The symbol (word, image or sign) can stand for the real thing; but by being named the thing loses its self definition, its simple capacity to be itself. Once named it could be named in some other way" (*Easthope* 35).
By entering language, the Symbolic stage, the child commits himself to the external pool of signifiers which are going to constitute his subjectivity now that he has lost his own direct self-identity, the dyadic relation with the mother.

Ferdinand Saussure distinguishes between the structured sound of a word (the signifier) and the meaning it relates to in a particular context (the signified); together the signifier and the signified constitute a complete sign. Lacan maintains that consciousness operates at the level of the sign but in the process of constructing the sign (in speech or writing) we do not choose the signifiers with a view to the sounds (or phonemes) each of them are primarily made of. Phonemes being “negative entities” (Saussure 119), that is to say, distinct things having no meaning of their own but making meaning through contrastive distribution in signifiers, the choice of the signifiers remain an unconscious act for the subject. In order to reach the conscious level of sign, the subject must first enter the system in which signifiers relate to each other independent of the subject. It makes conscious meaning possible only by being excluded from it. For Lacan, the split between the conscious and unconscious faculties is like the bar between the signifier (capital ‘S’) and the signified (small ‘s’) in the following formula:

\[ \frac{S}{s} \]  

(Ecrits 149)

Language produces coherent meaning by virtue of its linearity and the quality of substitution. Roman Jakobson, in *The Fundamentals of Language*, investigates these two dimensions of language in terms of metonymy and metaphor. Lacan points out that in metonymy a signifier in a linear chain can by itself cross the bar and produce an unintended signified. In metaphor, a signifier can connote something else than its intended meaning. Puns are good examples of this sort. Because of this arbitrary nature of
language, Lacan concludes that words both constitute and alienate the subject. I have attempted a semiotic analysis of this spill-over effect in my reading of the author's "The Eyes are not Here" in chapter four. Comparison with Prufrock's dilemma in T.S.Eliot's poem and Marlow's predicaments in Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* has situated the authorial crisis in sharper focus.

Among the early influences that shaped our author's literary grain are the English and American comic strips of the late 1930s and the Armenian-American author William Saroyan (1908-1981) whom Ruskin discovered in the 1950s. Apart from occasional allusions to Saroyan's works, the first part of chapter six will be devoted to a comparative study of a work each of Ruskin Bond and William Saroyan. Ruskin mentions in his Memoir that during his stay with father in Jamnagar, Gujarat, in India, he was fascinated by comic paper heroes like Korky the Kat, Tiger Tim, Desperate Dan and Our Wullie. These books combined literal texts with visual caricatures in narrative sequences of what can be called revisions of objective reality. Caricatures are critiques of representational art, explaining the impossibility of signifying reality through exaggerated distortion of the signifying process. When words are ascribed to caricaturized images in comic strips, the art form self-reflexively comments on the gap between the two parts of the Saussurian sign. The subject in the signified visual image is barred from itself in the verbal signifiers. The usage of a system of signifiers which is external to the subject is likely to create unconscious distortions of consciously intended meanings in the signified. The signified images become figuratively ambivalent caricatures. The comicality of the comic strips lies in this self-directed humor about the paradox of subjectivity. For Ruskin, who was nurtured on the metafiction of the comic strips, verbalized fantasies of the self
become caricatures of presumed decisiveness of meaning. The unconscious desires for and fear of the Other seamlessly spill over the intended emphases of the manifest text.

When the first person narrator of “Time Stops at Shamli” imagines Major Roberts, the man he is searching for, his double, not to be a Frenchman or an Englishman but a man without care, cutting wood and catching fish in the mountains, he is fantasizing a persona who unconsciously grows out of the author’s own lineage. The “Major” of Major Roberts can well be his father who was an officer in the RAF and “Roberts” of Major Roberts is an Englishman or a European. My reading of the novella in chapter four will show how the image of a pastoralist Major Roberts stems from Ruskin’s memory of his soldier father’s proclivities for nature. The narrator’s primal fantasy revolving around a sensual landscape and Sushila is deconstructed by the subject’s unconscious drives for identification with the lonely Anglo-Indians in the hotel.

In the next chapter, I will briefly refer to the context of Anglo Indian life and writing which both nourished and poisoned Ruskin’s life in and attitude to colonial India. The problematic nature of the authorial negotiation with his identity crisis can be gauged psychoanalytically if the roots of the psychic schism engendered by a culturally hyphenated existence are contextualized.