

ISSN 2319 – 7684

MIDDLE FLIGHT

SSM JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE

A National Level Peer Reviewed Journal

Vol. 3 No. 1

November 2014

**SPECIAL VOLUME:
British Literature**

ISSN 2319 – 7684

MIDDLE FLIGHT

SSM JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE

A National Level Peer Reviewed Journal

**SPECIAL VOLUME:
British Literature**

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

**S. S. MAHAVIDYALAYA
KESHPUR, PASCHIM MEDINIPUR
PIN: 721150, WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

Vol.3

November 2014

No.1

MIDDLE FLIGHT
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE
A National Level Peer Reviewed Journal

Editorial Board:

Bill Ashcroft, Australian Professorial Fellow, School of the Arts and Media, UNSW, Sydney
Krishna Sen , Professor , University of Calcutta (Retd.)
Tirthankar Das Purkayastha, Professor, Vidyasagar University
Sankar Prasad Singha, Professor, Vidyasagar University
Mahadev Kunderi, Professor, Mysore University
Binda Sharma, Associate Professor, C.M.D. College (PG)
Satyaki Pal , Associate Professor, R. K. M. Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur (PG)
Goutam Buddha Sural , Associate Professor, Bankura Christian College (PG)
Jaydeep Sarangi, Associate Professor, Jogesh Chandra College
Sudhir Nikam, Associate Professor, B. N. N. College (PG)
Dinesh Panwar, Assistant Professor, University of Delhi

Advisory Board:

Jawaharlal Handoo, Professor, Tezpur University (Retd.) & President, Indian Folklore Congress
Parbati Charan Chakraborty , Professor, The University of Burdwan (Retd.)
B. Parvati, Professor, Andhra University
Angshuman Kar, Associate Professor, The University of Burdwan
Simi Malhotra, Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia University
Shreya Bhattacharji, Associate Professor, Central University of Jharkhand
Ujjwal Jana, Assistant Professor, Pondicherry University
Subhajit Sengupta, Assistant Professor, Vidyasagar University

Editor: Debdas Roy
Profdebdasroy@gmail.com

Published: November, 2014

ISSN: 2319 – 7684

Published by Department of English, S. S. Mahavidyalaya
Keshpur, Paschim Medinipur, Pin: 721150
Ph: 03227-250861, Mail: ssmahavidyalaya@gmail.com
© S. S. Mahavidyalaya

Price: India:Rs.300.00 Overseas: \$ 30

Notwithstanding the craze among a section of students in Indian universities and colleges to pursue English literature (by which the majority understand British Literature) as their course of study more from a sense of expediency than out of genuine interest, there has been, during the last decades, a shift from the 'British' to the 'Non-British', thanks to the overseas forces at play. The paradox of English studies in Indian colleges and Universities is that after their masters, research aspirants quarantine themselves against those writers on whom they thrived. What a 'reversal' in the 'fortune' of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne and others! The number of scholars undertaking research in British Literature has dropped dramatically. Keeping in mind the pressing 'demand' of the academic community, attempts have been made to dismember the university curriculum with a view to replacing some 'dated foreign products' with the 'latest indigenous marketable' ones, resulting in the reduction of the British literature to bare essentials. Restructuring of the canon is a kind of pruning which may result in significant growth and branching, but unchecked denudation of the boughs of the mother stock may lead to the death of the main trunk. That there is a middle ground between the poles – puritanical recoiling at the mention of the word colonial on the one hand and doting upon the postcolonial on the other – has been hinted at, in an essay included here, by Professor Purkayastha who, while lauding the "histrionically charged readings of the plays of Shakespeare" by some legendary teachers, has looked towards the "post-colonial adaptations/re-workings" of the immortal bard. While commenting upon the use of the word "romantic" in a variety of cultural contexts Professor Singha has discussed the "divergent echoes inhabiting the garden of romantic literature". What's wrong if there be 'divergent' notes and 'remixes' in 'our' concert of English literature studies too? Another site of reconciliation is the study of the relationships between man and nature touched upon in this volume by Kaustav Chanda. By establishing a link between Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna" and the *Bhagavad Gita* Parneet Jaggi has well argued that "an Empedoclean with a painful awareness of ennui" may find solace from oriental philosophy enshrined in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Sourav Pal has rightly undertaken an enquiry as to whether the fictional world of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may "have any relevance to the world we live in".

All the papers included here excepting those of Professor Purkayastha and Professor Singha, the inclusion of which is the privilege of the editor, have been duly referred to and recommended by our esteemed reviewers. The launching of the third volume of *Middle Flight* would hardly be possible without the unstinted support from all concerned. Documentation has not been impeccably uniform. Some of our reviewers accepted some well-written but differently documented papers and it has been our principle to honour their decision. Congrats to all concerned for making the publication of the journal possible.

CONTENTS

Tirthankar Das Purkayastha	Shakespeare and Our Pedagogical Practices
Bipasha Majumder (De)	A Green Reading of Shakespeare's <i>As You Like It</i>
Debdas Roy	Donne's <i>Third Satire</i> : A Re-reading
Shivika Mathur	Political Contours in Godwin's <i>Enquiry Concerning Political Justice</i>
Subrata Sahoo	Mapping of Individual Perception onto Physical Geography: A Reading of Blake's "London"
Sankar Prasad Singha	Other Echoes Inhabit the Garden: Re-reading Nineteenth Century British Romantic Poetry
Joyjit Ghosh	Re-reading "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" as a 'human tale'
Srabanti Mukherjee	Gendered Politics of Gaze in Browning's 'My Last Duchess'
Deblina Hazra	'Elegant Economy': A Study of Old Age and Economic Agency in Elizabeth Gaskell's <i>Cranford</i>
Shramana Das Purkayastha	Finding the "Divinely Human": Humanitarian Intimacy and the Crisis of Faith in George Eliot's <i>Silas Marner</i>
Jayanta Mukherjee	The Moral Dilemma of Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> : A Critical Study
AninditaBhaumik	Representation of Same-Sex bonds in Wilkie Collins's Three Major novels
Parneet Jaggi	Matthew Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna' and the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>

Purnima Chakraborti	<i>Sherlock Holmes: The Myth Reworked</i>
Sudip Kumar Das	Memory and Writing: A Study of Hardy's 'Poems of 1912-13'
Bidisha Mukherjee	Playboy and Patriarchy: Reprresentations of Authority and Resistance in J. M. Synge's <i>The Playboy of the Western World</i>
Samit Kr. Maiti	Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> : An Apocalyptic Voyage of Self-discovery through Psychic Explorations
Maitrayee Misra	The Inseparable Shadow: Depiction of Death in Katherine Mansfield's 'The Garden Party' and 'The Fly'
Sourav Pal	Orwell's <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> : No Concern for Us?
Asis De & Soumen Chatterjee	Need the Mask of the 'Man'? : Exploding Masculinity in Virginia Woolf's <i>To the Lighthouse</i>
Hasina Wahida	Multiple Voices in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": A Bakhtinian Reading
Basudeb Chakrabarti	Identity in Harold Pinter: An Existentialist Exploration of Deborah's Trauma in <i>A Kind of Alaska</i>
Soumya Mukherjee	Fear: A Major Catalyst in Pinter's ' <i>The Birthday Party</i> '
Kaustav Chanda	Environment in Literature: An Ecocritical Reading of Kenneth Anderson's Jungle Lore
Rina Rajbanshi	Ageing, Memory and Self-delusion: An Analysis of Julian Barnes's <i>The Sense of an Ending</i>

Contributors

Professor (Dr.) Tirthankar Das Purkayastha, Professor of English, Vidyasagar University & a poet of eminence

Bipasha Majumder (De), Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English, Debra T.S.K.S.

Dr. Debdas Roy Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English, S. S. Mahavidyalaya

Shivika Mathur , Assistant Professor of English, University of Delhi

Subrata Sahoo, Assistant Professor of English, Contai P. K. College

Professor (Dr.) Sankar Prasad Singha, Professor of English, Vidyasagar University

Dr. Joyjit Ghosh, Assistant Professor of English, Vidyasagar University

Srabanti Mukherjee , Guest Lecturer in English , Hetampur Krishna Chandra College & M. Phil. Research Scholar, The University of Burdwan

Deblina Hazra, M. Phil. Research Scholar in English, Jadavpur University

Shramana Das Purkayastha, Guest Lecturer in English, Vijaygarh Jyotish Ray College

Dr. Jayanta Mukherjee, Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Belda College

Anindita Bhaumik, Assistant Professor of English, Panskura Banamali College

Dr. Mrs. Parneet Jaggi, Lecturer in English, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Government College, Rajasthan and a poet of eminence

Dr. Purnima Chakraborti, Assistant Professor of English, Vidyasagar College, Kolkata

Sudip Kumar Das, Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Hijli College

Bidisha Mukherjee, Ph. D. Research Scholar, Vidyasagar University

Samit Kr. Maiti, Assistant Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Seva Bharati Mahavidyalaya

Maitrayee Misra, Ph. D. Research Scholar, Guru Ghasidas Central University

Sourav Pal, Assistant Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Gourav Guin Memorial College

Asis De, Assistant Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Mahishadal Raj College

Soumen Chatterjee, Guest Teacher in English, Mahishadal Raj College

Hasina Wahida, Ph. D. Research Scholar in English, The University of Burdwan

Basudeb Chakrabarti, Assistant Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Jangipur College

Soumya Sundar Mukherjee, Ph. D. Research Scholar in English, Vidyasagar University & Assistant Teacher, Joypur ST. SC. and BC. High School

Kaustav Chanda, Part-time Lecturer in English, K. K. Das College, Kolkata, & Guest-Lecturer, Vidyasagar (Evening) College, Kolkata

Rina Rajbanshi, Ph. D. Research Scholar in English, Pondicherry University

Arup Ratan Chakraborty, Assistant Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Santal Bidroha

Sardha Satabarshiki Mahavidyalaya

Shakespeare and Our Pedagogical Practices

Tirthankar Das Purkayastha

Abstract: This paper pays tribute to a constellation of Shakespeare-teachers from West Bengal whose teaching of Shakespeare in the class-room unveiled the beauty of his plays to their students. Their histrionically charged readings of the plays could provide a taste of Shakespeare's poetry to their students, which, for lack of access to stage-productions in the city playhouses, most of them could not possibly have. This laid the foundation of the dominant mode of Shakespeare-teaching, not only in West Bengal but almost everywhere else in this country, where the appreciation of Shakespeare has depended almost solely on the reading of the plays on the printed page with little or no reference to actual stage-productions. The paper makes out a case for the study of the post-colonial adaptations/re-workings of Shakespeare in this country as plays in their own right.

Keywords: pedagogy, theatrical experimentations, re-inscription.

The occasion of the 450th anniversary of the birth of the great Bard of Avon which falls this year prompts some thinking on the long tradition of pedagogy centering on his works in this part of the country. It has included names of some eminent teachers who have deserved tributes no less than the dramatist they had done so much to popularize. In the following pages, I shall try to remember the significance of their role as mediators between cultures at a crucial moment of the country's political history. Since in this country Shakespeare is meant, primarily to be read, rather than acted, and not *vice versa*, it is to this sphere of interpretive activities that one must turn to account for the changing fortunes of his popularity.

The literati of the Indian sub-continent, it is well-known, owed their early exposure to Shakespeare to the educational policies of their colonial masters. The study of Shakespeare or Milton was enjoined upon the brightest of the native population to inculcate Christian piety, in default of any direct moral or theological instruction. The appreciation of Shakespeare in those early days of his inclusion in the academic curriculum was assisted no doubt by the labours of some renowned teachers of the day who brought their innate histrionic talents to bear upon their readings of Shakespeare in the classroom. Henry Vivian Derozio and David Lester Richardson, both of whom taught at Hindu College in Calcutta, left lasting impressions on the minds of their students that included some of the finest minds of Young Bengal, exposing them to the strains of Shakespeare's poetry. Macaulay's famous words to Richardson in one of his letters – "I may forget everything about India, but not your reading of Shakespeare, *never*" (qtd. in Sen 59) – are in acknowledgement of his great ability as a teacher.

All this shows the role played by the academia in determining the nature of Shakespeare's reception in this part of the country where the appreciation has depended almost exclusively on teaching, rather than performance, of his plays. Despite occasional instances of performance of certain scenes of *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice* and other Shakespearean plays by the students in the colonial era, these were mainly in the nature of training in the art of reciting Shakespeare rather than full-fledged stage-presentations. Whatever passed muster as genuine Shakespearean plays in colonial Bengal were invariably those performed by the British actors and actresses for the entertainment of the ruling class, to which the native population, by and large, had no access. On 17 August 1848 was staged at the Sans Souci theatre, a famous English playhouse in Calcutta, a production of *Othello*, which created some sensation by including in its cast 'a native gentleman' to play the role of the 'noble moor'. Although Baishnav Charan Adya, the native actor, had made his way into the jealously guarded territory of the 'Sahibs' by dint of his talents, his debut was greeted with unconcealed derision on the part of the reviewers referring to him as the "real unpainted nigger Othello"(Singh: 79).

The European viewers' contempt for the native endeavours to reproduce Shakespeare on stage, however, was matched by the average Bengali playgoers' indifference to the unmediated Shakespeare. The unfamiliarity of the English tongue did not seem to be the only cause of the apathy. Girish Chandra Ghosh's production of the Bengali rendering of *Macbeth* failed to draw

crowds on account of the alienness of the play's setting. It was not until the exoticism of the plays was tempered by relocating their stories in the familiar setting of their own country or society that they began to interest the native viewers. What motivated the adaptations of Shakespeare by the native playwrights was their own sense of joy that they wanted to transmit to the less privileged sections of their countrymen. If the inept productions here and there made mockeries of Shakespeare's creations, these in no way detracted from the value of the original plays, regarded as if by common consent as the ultimate statements on the universal human condition. Despite the native playwrights' own conviction about the universal validity of the stories they adapted, their work, involving departures from Shakespeare, however, entailed a degree of artistic autonomy that rendered their role as mediators somewhat ambiguous. Undertaken mainly to enrich the native dramatic tradition with borrowings from abroad, these attempts to adapt the Shakespearean plays to the socio-cultural milieu of the Indian audience did not even remotely suggest the irreverence of some of their postcolonial counterparts.

It was, however, in the classrooms rather than in the playhouses of this country that the foundations of what is now seen as "a colonial legacy" (Singh: 84) were laid— the reputation of Shakespeare as a universal bard, loved by the ruler and the ruled, whose meanings transcended the specificities of place and time. Calcutta metropolis, the capital of the country during British rule until December 1911, witnessed a long string of illustrious teachers shouldering the onerous task of teaching Shakespeare to their native students. The list included besides teachers of European origins, Bengali scholars that excelled as teachers as well as manipulators of the language of their colonial masters. What separated the project of disseminating the knowledge of Shakespeare through teaching of his plays in the classroom from its counterpart in the arena of theatre is its concern with the verbal music of Shakespeare's plays that the teachers were so eminently fitted to capture and communicate. The memoirs of the students who sat at the feet of Richardson are eloquent in their praise of this particular trait of their great teacher:

D. L. Richardson's readings from Shakespeare. Nothing like it was heard before. While reading Shakespeare, he attained a state of delirious ecstasy and the students succumbed to his powers of seduction. It is undeniable that he was responsible not a little for the flowering of Michael Madhusudan Datta's poetic genius. Listening to him, the students felt that there had never been a poet like Shakespeare nor any language richer than

English. (*Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga Samaj/Ramtanu Lahiri and Contemporary Bengali Society*) (qtd in Ghose 40).

The great legacy of Richardson, who, incidentally, was also one of the founders of the Chowringhee theatre of Calcutta, was passed on to other teachers whose interpretations of Shakespeare relied heavily on their perceptive reading of the plays. It was not only the lack of exposure to the performance of Shakespeare on stage but also a decided privileging of reading over acting by the teachers that determined the dominant mode of reception of Shakespeare in Bengal. What P.C. Ghose, one of the foremost teachers of his time, remembers about the distinctiveness of H.M. Percival's art of teaching underlines the latter's indifference to theatre:

It revealed to us a new world of beauty and thought into which the profane herd of critics were never allowed to intrude. ... A philosopher in outlook, he perhaps overemphasized the ethical import of Shakespeare's plays, but in his interpretations he often hit the mark nearer than many of the present day critics to whom only the play is the thing and anything else nothing. (qtd. in Sen: 61)

Also in his later communications with his student, Percival confirmed the latter's intuitions:

You ask me if I go to see Shakespeare plays acted in the theatres here. I went to two plays, *R. and J.* and *Macbeth*. It would be unkind and unjust to run down the acting because it did not come up to my expectations. But the fact remains that your and my expectations are those of *students* of Shakespeare characters and of human nature, while the performances on the stage are those of *actors*. And students and actors of Shakespeare often differ in their interpretation of the meaning. I was deeply disappointed – this is all that I can allow myself to say – and have not been to a theatre ever since. (Ghosh: 17)

The exclusive engagement with the text on the printed page, unaffected by the knowledge of any contamination of its purity by the theatrical representations, enabled the students to enjoy the sheer power of the book. The ahistorical line of interpretation supported by Richardson and his followers placed Shakespeare's poetry above either Dryden or Pope on the grounds of the former's claim to timelessness. This enabled the aesthetic enjoyment of the depiction of 'human

nature' in the Shakespearean dramas to continue in this country amid the clamour of the nationalist movement for the rejection of all material commodities of British trade.

The editorial labours of H.M. Percival, the textual scholarship of P.C. Ghose, T. N. Sen's penchant for the appreciation of artistic workmanship, S.C. Sengupta's earnest analysis of the text, to name only a few great teachers, comprised an august pedagogical tradition to which many others have subsequently contributed. The emphasis that it laid on Shakespeare's transcendental appeal as a dramatist shaped the native response so radically that the transfer of political power in 1947 left his place in the critical estimation of him in this country unscathed. In 1964, the Indian nation, as a whole, celebrated the 400th year of his birth with much fanfare. A volume of essays by eminent Shakespeare-scholars published on this occasion from a small town in North Bengal was representative of many others brought forth from different parts of the country, proclaiming the universal appeal of the great dramatist: "We can claim him as our own", wrote the editor of this volume, "no less than our English brethren across the seas. So by paying respect to his memory, we only acknowledge our spiritual ancestry" (Biswas: 85). An offshoot of the critical preoccupation with Shakespeare's concern with the eternal truths about mankind was resistance to critical attention to ephemeral details of topical significance, apparent in the following excerpt from a scholarly article on the subject of witchcraft in *Macbeth* in a prestigious volume on Shakespeare published by the Department of English, University of Calcutta in 1966: "For whoever cares to study the social life in the age of Christ to understand 'the sower and the seed' and 'the prodigal son'? (Sen: 37) asks the author. The liberal humanist tradition of the 'universal Shakespeare' remained too deeply influential, even beyond the end of the colonial phase, to encounter any challenge in the sphere of the institutional pedagogy in this country. This has led, on one hand, to the ossification of Shakespeare into a mere literary text, to be devoured by the students expected to answer a limited number of questions repeated endlessly over the years, and, to the prevalence, on the other, of a critical practice that is "essentially imitative and derivative"(Singh: 95).

Recently, however, the English departments of this country are coming under increasing pressure to accommodate in their syllabi authors from outside the pale of Euro-American literary traditions, who might represent the marginalized or peripheral voices of the erstwhile empire. While this has often resulted in the curtailment in the number of Shakespearean plays to be

taught, there is, till date, little indication of resistance to his preeminence. The abandonment of the earlier convention, prevalent in the majority of English departments, of devoting a full paper to Shakespeare in favour of studying him *along with* other playwrights, leading apparently to a ‘diminution of Shakespeare’s stature’ (Johnson: 230) in the syllabus, does not, at any rate, indicate any adversarial stance on the part of the syllabus-makers in this country . Despite the fact that the teaching of *The Tempest* has now become almost *de rigueur* in most universities, this has rarely amounted to any radical shift in our pedagogical perspectives on this play, where the traditional view of Prospero as a magician-turned-magus persists alongside the seemingly incompatible view of him as a tyrant.

The conservatism, inherent in the academic system, is responsible no doubt for the lack of free flow of ideas between the mutually exclusive spheres of academic pedagogy and theatrical experimentations. To the latter belong many daring, if somewhat irreverent, postcolonial adaptations of Shakespeare that reflect urgent engagement with contemporary issues of class, gender and social politics. Utpal Dutt’s Bengali version of *Macbeth*, Habib Tanvir’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (*Kaam Dev Ka Apna Basant Ritu Ka Sapna*) and B.V Karanth’s *Barnam Vana* are some of the most celebrated adaptations of Shakespeare to the performance-codes of the indigenous dramatic traditions. Unhindered by any compulsion to remain faithful to the ‘authentic’ Shakespeare, the directors are guided solely by their intuitive perception of the mental horizons of their actors and the audiences in following certain aspects of the Shakespearean dramaturgy and ignoring others. The loss entailed by such selective fidelity to the text, justified in terms of the need to overcome the sense of otherness, is amply compensated by the gains in audience-reception. Each of these productions, negotiating between diverse cultural traditions, enacts a re-inscription of Shakespeare in popular understanding.

While the importance of the sensitive reading of the text in the classroom cannot be overemphasized, there is the equal need of recognizing the complex process of hybridization that has marked Shakespeare’s reception in the larger space of popular culture in this country. If the inclusion of the film-versions of some major Shakespearean plays in the syllabi of the English departments of a few Indian universities is indicative of a shift in the mindset of the academia, it is expected that there will be shown equal tolerance, in the near future, of the indigenous stage adaptations of Shakespeare. There cannot be a greater tribute to the great bard than to study him

not only in the context of the Western dramatic traditions but also in relation to the many re-inscriptions of his plays in the ideologically contested field of modern Indian theatre.

Works Cited

Biswas, D.C. (Ed.) *A Garland for Shakespeare*, Shakespeare Quatercentenary Celebration Committee, Jalpaiguri, 1964. Print.

Ghose, P.C *Presidency College Magazine Silver Jubilee Number*. Rpt. in *Oxy-News*, edited, published and printed by Prasanta Sanyal on behalf of Indian Oxygen Limited,1964. Print.

Johnson, David. "From the colonial to the post-colonial Shakespeare and education in Africa". *Post-colonial Shakespeares*. Ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin. London: Routledge. 1998. 218-234. Print.

Sen, Ashoke. "Shakespeare Teaching in Calcutta", *Studies in Shakespeare*. Ed. Kalyan Kumar Chatterjee. The University of Burdwan, 1999. 59-68. Print.

Sen, Sri C. "Studies in Macbeth". *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare*. Ed. Amalendu Bose, Calcutta University, 1966. 22-38. Print.

Singh, Jyotsna. "Different Shakespeares : The Bard in Colonial/ Postcolonial India". *Modern Indian Theatre: A Reader*. Ed. Nandi Bhatia. New Delhi: OUP, 2009. 77- 96. Print.

Bipasha Majumder (De)

Abstract: The present paper proposes to re-read the representation of nature in William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It* from an ecocritical perspective. Shakespeare did not write in response to our present-day environmental crisis. The explicitly activist position of Silko, Abbey or Thoreau is not, therefore, found in his plays. Nevertheless, as Simon Estok reminds us in *An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster*, it is not easy to avoid in Shakespeare the feelings of what Scott Slovic calls 'ecodespair.' In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare has advocated the ecocentric philosophy of life instead of the reigning philosophies of Western Civilization which were deeply anthropocentric; that is, human beings were viewed as opposed to and superior to nature, and free to exploit the valuable resources of nature to meet their own needs. The ecocentric values of collective ethical responsibility and the claims of the natural community beyond ourselves receive expression in this play.

Key words: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, Ecocriticism, Ecodespair, Ecophobia.

Ecocritical Studies of Early Modern writers such as Shakespeare are still fairly few in number. 'Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: An Analysis of "Home" and "Power" in *King Lear*' by Simon C. Estok, and 'Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Unexpected Return of the Elizabethan World Picture' and *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* by Gabriel Egan are the most influential writings in this field of study. However, this is only a beginning for an ecocritical scholarship of Shakespeare. In this article I propose to explore an ecocritical approach towards William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. However, to many Shakespeare scholars, ecocriticism does not seem to be new. They consider it similar to old thematicism and nature studies. They raise questions the potential of ecocriticism to shed new light, either methodologically or theoretically, on their field of study. To address this complicated issue, we may first analyze the term 'ecocriticism' and then re-read the representation of nature in *As You Like It* from an ecocritical perspective.

As a distinctive critical approach to literature, ecocriticism was not inaugurated until late in the 1980s in the USA. 'Green Studies' is an alternative term for ecocriticism in the UK where this new approach to literature began in the early 1990s. It is appropriate here to stress that though ecocriticism as a separate discipline emerged in the 1990s, it is a fact that the relation between man and his physical environment had always been intriguing to literary critics. This interest can be explained in two ways. First, man could realize in the last decade of the twentieth century that the greatest problem of the twenty-first century would be the survival of the earth with all her living and non-living beings. Secondly, it is within some physical environment that man always exists and there cannot be 'is' without 'where' as Lawrence Buell has put it. In fact man feels threatened in the ecologically degraded world. The last decade of the twentieth century clearly showed that man should do something to help the earth survive. Ecocriticism is one of the ways in which humanists strive to save the earth from destruction. However, one can trace the term 'ecocriticism' back to William Rueckert's essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' published in 1978. Cheryll Glotfelty revived the term in 1989. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in literary Ecology* (1996) edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm is one of the most important books in this new field of criticism. The term ecocriticism is a 'semineologicistic level' for a 'unidoctrinalist imputation' (Buell: 'Letter' in "Forum on Literatures of the Environment" *The Modern Language Association of America* 1091). 'Eco' is an abbreviated form of 'ecology' which is concerned with the relationship between living organism (biotic component) and their natural environment (abiotic component). Similarly, ecocriticism is concerned with the relationship between literature and environment or how the relationships between living organisms and their physical environment are reflected in literature. Simon C. Estok argues:

. . . ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debates notwithstanding, firstly by the ethical stand it takes, its commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study, and secondly by its commitment to make connections....Ecocriticism, therefore, is not simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analyzing the function - thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise- of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds. (16-17)

Now, twentieth and twenty-first century environmental writers are explicitly political in their comments regarding nature and various aspects of it and, therefore, require less of the kind of explication that Shakespeare requires. Obviously, he did not write in an age of environmental crisis or in response to our present-day environmental crisis. So, the explicitly activist position of Silko, Abbey or Henry David Thoreau is not found in Shakespeare. Nevertheless, — and this is significant — as Simon Estok reminds us in *An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster*, it is not easy to avoid in Shakespeare the feelings of what Scott Slovic calls ‘ecodespair’ in his Foreword to *The Greening of Literary Scholarship*. Nevertheless “it is difficult to avoid the feelings of ‘ecodespair’ Scott Slovic mentions in his Foreword to *The Greening of Literary Scholarship* as Simon C. Estok has put it in ‘An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster’(110). He has used a term ‘ecophobia’ which in clinical psychology designates ‘an irrational fear of home...fear of a loss of agency and control to Nature. . . . It is ecophobia that allows “man” unquestioned use of land and animals’(112). One may recall God’s declaration in the first twenty-six verses of the *Genesis* that man must have dominion over everything. Control of the natural environment by man had started since The Neolithic Revolution. In Shakespeare’s times changes in man’s relationship with nature were quite visible. Control of nature as a God-gifted right of man became obvious in this time. The reigning religions and philosophies of Western Civilization were deeply anthropocentric; that is, human beings were viewed as opposed to and superior to nature and free to exploit the valuable resources of nature to meet their own needs. Shakespeare was much concerned about this anthropocentric attitude which must needs be replaced by a biocentric worldview — the view that all living things and their earthly environment, possess value, significance and even social and political rights.

Let us now explore Shakespeare’s representation of nature in *As You Like It*, one of his most popular pastoral comedies. It is set in a duchy in France, but most of the action takes place in a location called the Forest of Arden, which may be intended for the Ardennes, a forested region of north-eastern France, but is sometimes identified with Arden, Warwickshire, near Shakespeare’s home town which was the ancestral origin of his mother’s family. A shady dark-green landscape is almost always there in the background, allowing us to breathe in our imagination the fresh air of the forest. Yet, the forest presented by Shakespeare in this play is not the same as we find in any other pastoral romance. It is not necessarily or unequivocally the

‘golden world’ of our imagination. It is never one of uncomplicated perfection. In fact, the world of Arden has not the rarefied atmosphere of an unearthly utopia. It is not idealized as in any other pastoral comedy. Rather it is subject to seasonal changes. The struggle for existence is as acute here as in the city. The shepherds and shepherdesses are not ideal and innocent persons of the golden age breathing in the idyllic atmosphere of Arcadia. A heartless coquette like Phebe and an ill-favoured Audrey, easily capable of deserting her true love to be the snobbish wife of a courtier, are found to dwell within its extensive air. The sentimentality of a traditional pastoral is entirely absent in this play. From the time of Theocritus to Shakespeare’s day, the pastoral had become increasingly artificial and presented an increasingly idealized view of the eternal bliss of rural life. In Thomas Lodge’s *Rosalynde*, the immediate source of the play, the conventional view of the pastoral is presented, where the country is all sweetness and light, and city is all intrigue and suspicion. But Shakespeare, while following the basic aspects of pastorals, is more complex and realistic than the writers of the traditional pastorals. The Forest of Arden in Shakespeare’s play is not the Garden of Eden.

Here feel we the penalty of Adam,

The seasons’ difference, as the icy fang

And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind (II.i. 5-7)

True, Charles makes the Forest of Arden sound like an enchanted place, the haven of eternal bliss when he tells Oliver about the old Duke’s banishment.

They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and

there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young gentlemen

flock to him everyday, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.

(I.i. 107-11)

But this passage seems to be incorporated into the play in order to set the pastoral tone as Shakespeare intended this play to be a pastoral comedy, though with certain differences. In fact, this play is a critique of the pastoral sentiment, an examination of certain familiar ideas regarding the simple forest life and the golden world of ancient Greek pastorals. Nature,

represented in this play, is a realistic one associated with wild beasts and bitter cold. Orlando speaks of the ‘uncouth forest’, ‘the bleak air’ and ‘this desert’ (II.vi. 6, 14, 16). Oliver becomes ‘a wretched ragged man’ threatened by savage beasts (IV.iii. 106). Nature represented in this play can easily be identified with nature of our present-day world (though hardly as polluted as ours), and Shakespeare with any environmentalist of the twentieth or the twenty-first century (though he is not as explicitly political as Thoreau or Silko). He can find

“tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

Sermons in stones, and good in everything.” (II.i. 16-17)

The discomforts of nature, says the old Duke, provide the valuable experiences of life and, therefore, are preferable to political intrigues, plots and perils of court life with its envies and deceptions. He says:

. . . these are counsellors

That feelingly persuade me what I am. (II.i. 10-11)

He indicates that the natural winds compared to the frosty breezes of court intrigues seem balmy. In fact the old Duke’s words here are a beautiful summing up of the thought, or of the moral experience that assures us that nature is a great spiritual illuminant ministering to the moral regeneration of human beings. However, the Duke who has been victimized and driven out of his home is soon heard regretting his need to victimize and kill the natives of this forest — the deer that must be killed for food. Thus it becomes clear that in this pastoral world, the real world must be reckoned with. In this context, one may recall the lines spoken by the old Duke:

Come, shall we go and kill us venison?

And yet it irks me, the poor dappled fools,

Beings native burghers of this desert city,

Should, in their own confines, with forked heads

Have their round haunches gored. (II.i. 21-5)

Moreover, Shakespeare has created the character of Jaques (Lodge's *Rosalynde* has no melancholy philosopher like him) who serves to add a realistic touch to the pastoral by pointing out a great flaw in the wounding and killing of innocent deer. In his opinion, the old Duke and his followers exiled in the Forest of Arden

Are mere usurpers, tyrants and what's worse,

To fight the animals and to kill them up,

In their assign'd and native dwelling place. (II.i 61-3)

Here Shakespeare wishes to replace the anthropocentric philosophy of Christianity by ecocentrism — the view that animals, no less than the human species, possess importance, value and even moral and political rights. In fact *As You Like It* has an enduring message to convey — the message that man and nature should live in amity and that the two communities — the human and the natural — should 'coexist, cooperate and flourish in the biosphere' (Glotfelty and Fromm 107). Otherwise, the ecological balance of the whole world will be disturbed, thus endangering human survival on earth. It is for the sake of our survival that we should protect the environment. And this is what, I think, Coleridge means to convey in poetic language to his readers when he says:

He prayeth well who loveth well

Both man and bird and beast

He prayeth best who loveth best

All things both great and small

For the dear God who loveth us,

He made and loveth all. ('The Ancient Mariner' 614-17)

Both the albatross in Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner' and the 'poor sequester'd stag' (II.i. 33) in the Forest of Arden are symbolic of Nature recklessly destroyed by human beings. Thus *As You Like It* clearly illustrates Shakespeare's biocentric world view. The old Duke exiled in the Forest of Arden and Jaques are only the mouthpieces of the dramatist advocating the

ecocentric philosophy of life. Shakespeare has emphasized here the ecocentric values of collective ethical responsibility and the claims of the natural community beyond ourselves. We may do well to recall what G. M. Hopkins wrote in 'Inversnaid':

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet. (13-16)

Works Cited

- Buell, Lawrence. 'Letter'. "Forum on Literatures of the Environment". *PMLA* 114:5, October, 1999. Print.
- Coleridge S. T. "The Ancient Mariner". *Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* Ed. E.H. Coleridge. London: Oxford UP, 1912, Rpt. 1975. Print.
- Egan, Gabriel. *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* Accent on Shakespeare. London: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Egan, Gabriel. "Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Unexpected Return of the Elizabethan World Picture". *Literature Compass* Vol. 1 Internet [http:// www.literature-compass.com](http://www.literature-compass.com) Jan, 2004.
- Estok, Simon C. "Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: An Analysis of 'Home' and 'Power' in *King Lear*". *AUMLA* 103, May, 2005. Print.
- Estok, Simon C. "An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster".

Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment. 12.2, Summer 2005. Print.

Glotfelty, Cheryll and Fromm, Harold. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996. Print.

Hopkins, G. M. "Inversnaid". *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Ed. Robert Bridges. London: Humphrey Milford, 1918. Print.

Rueckert, William. "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". *IOWA Review* 9.1, 1978. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Ed. A. W. Verity. Sri Ganesh Offset Press: Delhi, 2000. Print.

Lodge, *Thomas Rosalynde: or, Euphues, Golden Legacie*, Website: [http:// archive. org/ stream/ rosalynde17181 gut/ 17181.txt](http://archive.org/stream/rosalynde17181_gut/17181.txt). 16 April, 2014.

Donne's *Third Satire*: A Re-reading

Debdas Roy

Abstract: Donne's satires elicited mixed responses from his early and late contemporaries. While Jonson and Walton praised the satires, Dryden criticized them for their "rough cadence". This paper purports to read the *Third Satire* of Donne in the light of the poet's love of 'doubt' in matters of 'faith'. Doubt, one of the components of Western intellectual–philosophical traditions of scepticism, is the cornerstone of his thinking as poet and preacher. Many of the basic tenets of scepticism meet and merge in this masterpiece of satire written neither from the point of view of a Roman Catholic nor from the standpoint of an Anglican but by an honest, candid Christian who wanted to "seeke true religion" by bidding farewell to the dogmatic tendency of unthinking acceptance. This attitude of guarded acceptance, faithful tolerance and reasoned conformity is the satirist's message to those people who, during those windy days of strife, involved themselves in religions strife and reformative mania.

Keywords: Satire, Montaigne, scepticism, faith, religion, devotion.

Donne's Satires, five in number, made a mighty impact upon his contemporaries and elicited mixed response from John Dryden who, while charging Donne of "affecting metaphysics" and misleading the "minds of the fair sex" preferred Donne's Satires to Cleveland's on the ground that Donne gives us "deep thoughts in common language" though through "rough cadence" (Qtd. in Smith 150). The fact that Jonson "fulfilled the Countess of Bedford's wish to see Donne's satires" (perhaps prompted by Henry Goodyer), and that Jonson "added a poem lauding both them and her as 'of the best'" (Robbins qtd. in Hattaway 424-425) is significant because it is suggestive of contemporary interest in satire among Donne's patrons and famous poets. However to make a survey of critical responses to the satires of Donne is not my purpose here. This paper purports to read the *Third Satire* of Donne in the light of the poet's love of 'doubt' in matters of 'faith'. Doubt gives a permanent cast to Donne's thinking as a poet and preacher. The belief that doubt is a quality of the mind of a creative artist is supported by John Keats. Keats, in a letter

written in December 1817, is of the opinion that a creative artist must be “capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after truth” (Keats 43). The ‘doubt’ and ‘uncertainty’ that Keats speaks highly of are amply present in Donne; but here I am concerned with ‘doubt’ as one of the components of Western intellectual–philosophical traditions scepticism.

Donne’s sceptical bent of mind in matters of religion and faith is nowhere more evident than in the *Third Satire*. It was written probably between 1594 and 1595 when Donne was leaving the Inns of Court and seeking the patronage of Essex. Clive Bloom says that “it belongs to a moment of transition in his life” (79). It is an explicit avowal of and allegiance to the philosophy of doubt. Many of the basic tenets of scepticism meet and merge in this masterpiece of satire which was written neither from the point of view of a Roman Catholic nor from the standpoint of an Anglican but by an honest, candid Christian who wanted to “seeke true religion” by bidding farewell to the dogmatic tendency of unthinking acceptance. John Carey writes, “Satire 3, written in 1594 or 1595, shows he is no longer a convinced Catholic – though not yet a convinced Protestant either” (xxii). The sole concern of Donne in the satire is to seek out “faire Religion worthy of our soules devotion” (ll.5-6). According to William Zunder it is “a response to the religious changes of the century: to the rise of Protestantism” (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 79). According to P. M. Oliver it is a “sustained” attack on “irreligion and casual religion” (51). There is affinity between this satire and what Donne Says in his *Pseudo-Martyr*. In the *Preface* to the latter work Donne says that he “used no inordinate hast, non precipitation in binding my conscience to any locall Religion” (Milgate 138). The life–breath of this satire is quest, questioning and earnest inquiry. Milgate says that the central idea of this poem is found in an early prose composition of Donne, *Problem 5* where he says –

nor was (the Devill’s) Kingdome ever so much advanced by debating Religion
(Though with some aspersions of Error) as by a dull and stupid security, in which
many *grose things* are swallowed... (Donne qtd. in Milgate 140).

The satirist is pained at heart to see that his countrymen have gone back to “the first blinded age” and are accepting many unjust things blindly especially in matters of religion. “First blinded age” refers to the Pre-Christian period when people lacked the light of true religion. If things go on like this, the poet says apprehensively, then “thy father spirit” (l. 11) will “meet blinde

philosopher in heaven” (l.12). He rails against the tendency among people to get involved in polarized debate in matters of faith. People have forgotten, laments the poet, that ‘Soules devotion’, not hair splitting argumentation, is the crying need of religion. Donne comes very close to Agrippa who in the first chapter of *De incertitudine et vanitate Scientiarum* said:

And so large is the liberty of the truth, and the largeness thereof so free, that it cannot be perceived with the speculations of any science nor with any straight judgment of the sense . . . but with faith only . . . (Agrippa qtd. in Chaudhuri 7)

In chapter 101 of the same book Agrippa writes that “learned opinion” constitutes a tyranny born of pride: “For they are so stiff and obstinate in their opinions, that they leave no place for the holy ghost....” (Agrippa qtd. in Chaudhuri 7). Donne is almost in the same line of thinking as Agrippa when the former writes –

... shall thy father spirit
Meet blinde philosopher in heaven whose merit,
Of strict life may be imputed faith... (ll. 11–13)

Milgate says that Donne is using the key Lutheran concepts of imputation, and faith as the *sine qua non* of salvation, to suggest what would have horrified Luther: that men can be saved by their own “merits of strict life and that this can be imputed to them as justifying faith” (141). The “easie waye and neare to follow” shown by Christ (‘hee’) is the way of faith and total devotion. To the supposed objection of some section of clever people that total devotion is the other name of ‘feare’ Donne answers with conviction:

This feare great courage, and high valour is (l. 16)

Such earthly ‘valour’ as aiding the “mutinous Dutch” in the face of royal wrath, remaining in “ships wooden Sepulchers”, diving “seas, and dungeons of the earth”, possessing courageous fire to thaw the ice of “frozen North discoveries’ or standing “in the oven , fires of Spaine, and the line” is to Donne, “Courage of Straw” (l.28) . It is only “desperate coward” who can “leave the appointed field” (i.e. heaven) in his preference for “forbidden warres” (i.e. earthly pleasures). The satirist exhorts his countrymen not to pay homage to the “withered and worne strumpet” of intellectual and sensory pleasures that this world offers and not to ‘loath’ “...thy faire goodly

soule, which, doth / Give this flesh power to taste joy . . .” (ll.41-42). The climactic line comes at last –

Seeke true religion. (l. 43)

In order to find true religion some have gone to ‘Rome’, some have gone to ‘Geneva and some have stayed at ‘home’ not because their faith prompts them to do so but because “Some Preachers” (“vile ambitions bauds”) bid them think that ‘shee’ (i.e. true religion) “dwells with us” (i.e. England). Donne derides the arbiters of religious belief as ‘Godfathers’. Apart from touching upon such contemporary issues as imperial expansion, war against Spain, exploration, capitalist enterprises like diving and mining, amatory bullying etc., Donne reveals his attitude to four basic traditional issues like “the devil, the world, the flesh and the soul” (ll.33 – 42). Donne is not so sceptical as to lose all confidence in “fundamental certainties of the dominant view” (Milgate 141). Donne satirizes his countrymen on the “question of particular ecclesiastical allegiance” (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 80). The self-consciousness that is characteristic of Donne is absent here. Instead there is a plunge “into a recognizably contemporary world of naval expeditions and religious dissent whose evocation make the imagined worlds of Gascoigne and Lodge seem literary and artificial” (Oliver 50). The way Donne criticizes the bigoted people of his country reminds us of the way Montaigne criticized his:

We receive our religion only in our own way and with our own hands... We happen to have been born in a country when it was in practice.... (324)

The images employed here will fitly convey to us the satirist’s attitude towards religious fanaticism: ‘withered and worn strumpet’, ‘Flesh and joys’, ‘her ragges’, ‘state cloth where the Prince sate yesterday’, ‘Lecherous humors’, ‘wench’, ‘coarse country drudges’, ‘vile ambitions bauds’, ‘new like fashions’ ‘Godfather’ (used in a derogatory sense), ‘wives as their Guardians offer’, ‘whores’ etc. Definitely it is an attitude of strong disapproval and deep disgust. Let us take up the image which comes last in the list. Donne says that people who embrace a religious faith because their godfathers have dictated them to do so are –

... as Wards still

Take such wives as their Guardians offer, or

Pay valewes.

(ll. 60-62)

Wards who refused marriage arranged for them by their guardians had to pay them a sum called ‘the value of the marriage’. Similarly, the recusant had to pay for not attending his parish church. Donne’s satire is double edged here. It strikes at the commercial tendency of Churchmen and followers of Christianity on the one hand, and the royal policy of punishing the followers of Roman Catholicism on the other.

Donne’s satire in the next few lines is even more subtle:

Graccus loves all as one, and thinkes that so

As women do in divers countries goe

In divers habits, yet are still one kinde,

So doth, so is religion, and this blind-

ness too much light breeds . . .

(ll.64-68)

1. The Gracchi were champions of democracy and they found all religions to be of equal worth. Since all religions are of equal worth and are not without error, they think that one can follow any religion. This is again another form of blindness. It echoes Montaigne who wrote against the “vanity and pride in conceiving opinions” (324). Montaigne says “A doctrine seriously digested is one thing; another thing is these superficial impressions, which, born of the disorder of our unhinged mind, swim about heedlessly and uncertainly in the imagination. Miserable and brainless men indeed, who try to be worse than they can be!” (325). Finding the light of truth everywhere (i.e. in every sect), Graccus is blinded to true religion when he comes across it. Man must, of necessity, approve and follow one form of religion and the right one. Here we catch an echo of *Bhagavad Gita* where the divine Charioteer commands the fabled bowman Arjuna “not to be deluded of all knowledge and discrimination” (*Srimad Bhagavadgita*, III, 32. Ed. Ramsukhdas. Gita Press, 2010). It is noticeable that Donne is consciously rejecting here all-dismissive negative scepticism which holds that all sects are bad. His search for truth is never so radical as to destroy everything, as is the case with the Academic sceptics. Rather like Montaigne, Donne believes in ‘diversity’ and ‘variety’, and he believes that truth lies somewhere. One has to undertake a quest to find out truth. This attitude of acceptance, tolerance and conformity is the satirist’s message to those people who, during those windy days of strife,

involved themselves in religious strife and reformatory mania. Truth and falsehood, says Donne in this Satire, co-exist in society –

...though truth and falsehood bee

Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is (ll. 72- 73)

So the Satirist's proposal is two-fold. First, "Be busie to seeke her" (l.74). Second, "Keep the truth which thou hast found" (l.89). Both the suggestions need elaboration. The first one helps us come very near the question of wise doubt, a weapon which Donne wields against the attitude of blind acceptance. Donne says in this oft quoted section of the poem that truth belongs to none. There is no such static thing as the 'best religion'. One might adore 'an image' (like the Catholics), the other might 'Scorn an image' (Like the anti – Catholics) and still some other might always 'Protest' (like the Protestants). Donne lands all of them with a single stroke:

May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way

To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;

To Sleepe, or runne Wrong, is (ll.77-79)

This is too egalitarian to be a satire. Gosse says that at this point the poet drops satirical attitude and admits us to the notion of his own conscience (40). The poem's "honest doubt" has nothing to do with the pungency and bite of satire. Those who are inclined to consider this form of positive scepticism as the effusions of a young poet of the Renaissance era had better read the following extract from one of his *Sermons* which was written during the fag end of his life:

This very scruple was the voice and question of God in him; to come to a doubt, and to a debatement in any religious duty, is the voice of God in our conscience: *would you know the truth? Doubt, and then you will inquire* (emphasis mine): And facile *solutionem accipit anima, quae prius dubitavit*, says St. Chrysostome. As no man resolves of anything wisely, firmly, safely, of which he never doubted, never debated so neither doth God withdraw a resolution from any man, that doubts with an humble purpose to settle his owne faith, and not with a wrangling purpose to shake another in mans (Qtd. in Milgate 146).

The question is how can man who is so weak in his intellectual faculty, doubt and debate 'wisely'? The fact is that man has to question anything with "an humble purpose to settle his owne faith". Any wise doubt must be permeated by this spirit of humble supplication to someone who is beyond all doubt and in whom all wisdom resides. The phrase 'Strange ways' contains one significant metaphor of not taking the beaten path. In order to inquire one has to be daring enough to walk along an unfamiliar road. Such is the nature of this way that the traveller might go 'astray' (i.e. be misled), but that does not matter. What matters most is to "stand inquiring right". William Zunder terms it as "dispassionate search for truth" (Qtd. in Bloom 81). Every inquiry, according to Donne, has positive aspects. The stand that Donne takes here is essentially a Pyrrhonian stand of "reserved judgement" and "positive scepticism" (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 81). In the last years of the sixteenth century it was a "radical advocacy" (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 81). What is abominable to the satirist is 'sleep' and running 'wrong' (i.e. leaving the way in mid-journey). The metaphor of a tortuous journey is sustained in the succeeding lines –

On a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
And what the hills suddenness resists, winne so;
Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight
Thy soule rest, for none can work in that might. (ll.79-84)

This is a classic expression of the difficulty of reaching truth. William Zunder has pointed out that Donne took great care to write the lines. The manuscripts are marked by revisions. And it is one that F. R. Leavis, in a piece of criticism which is itself classic, singled out as an exemplary instance of enactment of the verse movement acting out the sense, in this case a sense of effort (236-237). Of course, Donne's stand differs from that of a thoroughgoing sceptic in a significant way. A thoroughgoing sceptic distrusts any truth but Donne's scepticism admits of the search for truth. "Though difficult to reach, truth is, nevertheless attainable" (qtd. in Bloom 83) says Zunder. Thus Donne's scepticism admits of compromise and is not 'ultimate' or 'absolute'. What we find in the satire is "democratic openness" (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 83)

The second suggestion of the satirist (“keepe the truth which thou hast found”) is no less significant. This liberty to form one’s own impression of truth has no enmity with the diverse faiths and varied practices followed by many. Time and again Donne recalls Montaigne’s concept of libertinism. Donne’s openness turns into defiance of royal power in the last section of the poem. The king with his scepter can not be the dictator of faith. Donne expresses similar feelings in one of his sermons. God has not empowered kings [“Signed kings blank – charters to kill whom they hate”, (l. 90)] to dictate man’s choice of religion. In line 92 (“Nor are they vicars, but hangmen to Fate”) the king is reduced to the stature of a “hangman”. The king may frame laws but not truth which is the outcome of an arduous personal search. Truth knows no sect. There can be Catholic Laws or Protestant practices; but truth can be given no such label. William Zunder says, “At a time when the dominant view took it for granted that rulers decided their subjects’ religion – this is a revolutionary stand to take” (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 83). Donne’s stand is in consonance with the contemporary developments in the continent. In France wars of religion took place. Jean Bodin’s *Six livres de la république* (‘Six Books on the Republic’) appeared in 1576, four years after the notorious massacre of French Protestants, the Huguenots, on St. Bartholomew’s Day, 1572 (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 83). John Knox in Geneva had already stressed the right of resistance – a right which is very much a feature of Calvinism. Zunder writes:

And Donne’s poem stands as a landmark in the growth of religious toleration and liberty of conscience in England. It stands near the beginning of a tradition that was to include such classic, if diverse, defences of freedom of thought and expression as Browne’s *Religio Medici* (‘The Religion of a Doctor’), written in the mid 1630s and first printed 1642, the year the Civil War broke out, and Milton’s *Areopagitica*, published two years later. It is a tradition that was to culminate in the seventeenth century in the philosophy of Locke and in the Toleration Act of 1689 (Zunder qtd. in Bloom 83) .

The poem almost becomes universal at the end where the poet, by employing an exquisite metaphor from the world of nature, visualizes the termination of all ‘tyrannous’ and consuming doubt in the wisdom of devotion to god –

As streames are, Power is; those blest flowers that dwell

At the rough streames calme head, thrive and do well,
But having left their roots, and themselves given
To the streams tyrannous rage, alas, are driven
Through mills, and rocks, and woods, and at last, almost
Consum'd in going, in the sea are lost:
So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust
Power from God claym'd, then God himself to trust. (ll.103 – 110)

The concluding lines record Donne's hatred of tyrannous, unjust power and faith in the freedom sanctioned by God. Of course, there is no denying the fact that despite its thematic strength, the poem sometimes assumes the tone of a Sermon – "the first its author preached from any pulpit" (Gosse 39).

Works Cited:

- Agrippa, Cornelius. Qtd. in *Infirm Glory*. Sukanta Chaudhuri. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965. Print.
- Bloom, Clive. *Jacobean Poetry and Prose*. London: Macmillan Press, 1988. Print.
- Carey, John. Introduction. *John Donne: The Major Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Donne, John. Qtd in *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams And Verse Letters*. W. Milgate. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967. Print.
- Dryden, John. Qtd. in *John Donne: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. A. J. Smith. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Gosse, Edmund. *The Life and Letters of John Donne* (Vol. I). Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1959. Print.
- Keats, John. 'Letter to George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 (?) December 1817'. *Letters of John Keats*. Ed. Robert Gittings. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970. Print.

Leavis, F. R. (Ed.). *A Selection from Scrutiny* (Vol. I). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968. Print.

Milgate, W. Introduction. *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams And Verse Letters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967. Print.

Montaigne, Michael de. 'Apology for Raymond Sebond'. *The Complete Works*. Ed. Donald Frame. California: Stanford University Press, 1965. Print.

Oliver, P. M. *Donne's Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion*. London: Longman, 1997. Print.

Robbins, Robin. 'Poets, Friends and Patrons' in *A Companion To English Renaissance Literature And Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. Print.

Zunder, William. 'The Poetry of John Donne: Literature, History and Ideology' in *Jacobean Poetry and Prose*. Clive Bloom. London: Macmillan Press, 1988. Print.

Political Contours in Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*

Shivika Mathur

Abstract: William Godwin's *Political Justice* saw the light of the day as a classic response to the French Revolution (1789). After the writings of Burke and Paine, Godwin's work was the popular response and perceived as offering a balanced view between Burke and Paine. This paper explores the context from which this political work stems. The paper argues that in the process of responding to the revolution, Godwin propounded a whole new concept of government, bordering on what we now call Anarchy. His ideas on revolution and political justice invite us to shift our focus from the rule of an external authority constituted in a government to the internal authority of the 'self'. The change in the face of the French Revolution and the onset of the Reign of Terror reflected in Godwin's illustration of his political principles. This paper attempts to revisit *Political Justice* by situating it in the volatile decade of the 1790s and bring to light the ramifications and the contemporary appeal of the political tradition in which Godwin placed himself while propounding his political ideas.

Key words: French Revolution, Revolution Controversy, Anarchy, Political Justice, Government.

William Godwin (b.1756), known to be a political reformer and a philosophical radical, is a prominent voice at a time in history when British political, social and literary circles were being impacted by the revolutions that occurred in America and France. These revolutions had political, economic and ideological underpinning and gave rise to a whole new discourse under the rubric of which questions of freedom, self, society, duties and rights, notions of private and public were being debated with fresh rigour. The British literature in 1790s is marked with critical and vigorous response, reaction and reassessment of the revolutions. This literary response was embodied in a variety of genres such as treatises, tracts, pamphlets, autobiographies, novels and poetry. While on the one hand, the ideals of the French Revolution (1789) were being used to promote reforms in Britain, there were other kinds of responses too. Three prominent writings in the aftermath of the French revolution have been at the centre of what is described as the 'Revolution controversy'- Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the*

Revolution in France (1790), Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1792) and William Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793). After the writings of Burke and Paine, Godwin's work was the most popular written response to the French Revolution. The focus of this paper is on Godwin's work, which was received by contemporary readers as offering a balanced approach between the fiery extremes of Burke and Paine. However, what Godwin really underscored was not the need to refute someone's response to the revolution but tap these intellectual currents to ponder over the very idea of society and government. The then Prime Minister of England, William Pitt famously said that there was no need to censor it, because at over £1 it was too costly for the average Briton to buy. However, a number of "corresponding societies" picked up *Political Justice*, sharing it with people. Eventually, it sold over 4000 copies and brought literary fame to Godwin.

For Godwin, 'political justice' meant "the adoption of any principle of morality and truth into the practice of a community," (Book 1, chapter4) and therefore the avowed aim to the text was to undertake an inquiry into the principles of society, of government and of morals. Given the context of the French revolution, it can be argued that Godwin began to look at the tenets of the revolution through the prism of philosophy. For many years Godwin held the view that monarchy as a species of government was unavoidably corrupt. But from a point where a government in its simple form was still desirable, Godwin moved onto a thorough repudiation of government. He gradually came to consider that "government by its very nature counteracts the improvement of original mind," illustrating these ideas in his novel *Caleb Williams or Things as They Are* (1794). These beliefs were later considered anarchist. Godwin articulated that all coercion and violence was not always immoral *per se*. He recognized the need for government in the short term and hoped that the time would come when it would be rendered unnecessary. Thus, he can be described as a gradualist anarchist rather than a revolutionary anarchist.

The tendency to read *Political Justice* in a primarily moral sense was widespread among many of Godwin's contemporaries. William Hazlitt called it "a metaphysical and logical commentary on some of the most beautiful and striking texts of Scripture" (35-36). Such readings projected Godwin as a moralist and an anarchist sometimes resulting in skewed understand of the many nuances of his political thought. If we consider this as a lacuna in the readings of Godwin's text, it can perhaps be filled by contextualizing Godwin, situating him and

his text in contemporary nascent English radicalism that, understand the motivations behind his political treatise and the extent to which these ideas could gain sustenance in the volatile times.

Context

William Godwin's work can be placed in the immediate background of the Revolution Controversy. The Revolution Controversy refers to a series of debate in Britain over the French Revolution, which lasted from 1789 to 1795. Occasioned by the overthrow of monarchy in France, a pamphlet war ensued following the publication of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which he supported the French aristocracy. Because he had earlier supported the American colonists in their rebellion against England, his views sent a shockwave through the country. Many writers responded, defending the revolution in France, among them Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. While, Godwin's *Political Justice* does not directly address the contemporary events but only the underlying principles of political philosophy, it is nevertheless firmly rooted in the contemporary war of words and beliefs raging in Britain.

Marilyn Butler, in her analytical work, provides an overview of the level at which radicalism was allowed a space in contemporary England. She notes the absence of any overt, public agency or organisation of reforms in England. Among the reformers were the Dissenters who relied on the support of Whigs to bring up their appeals in the Parliament. Godwin was a Dissenting clergyman trained in the Dissenters academies. Richard Price and Joseph Priestly were popular contemporary Dissenters. Another outlet to voice radical ideas and bring them in the public domain was the publishing industry, again, run by Dissenters like Joseph Johnson and Ralph Griffiths. As Butler notes, Joseph Johnson was indeed influential and hosted a close knit circle of 'informed opinion' constituted by Joseph Priestly, William Blake, Erasmus Darwin, Maria Edgeworth, William Wordsworth, William Godwin, Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft among others. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that their ideas facilitated mobilisation and recognition of political opinions in the public domain with emphasis on the political nature of the opinion.

William Pitt's administration had adopted a series of moves to stop this spread of radicalism. The Seditious Meetings Act, which restricted the right of individuals to assemble

publicly, and the Combination Acts restricting the formation of societies or organizations that favoured political reforms were imposed. In December 1792, Paine was tried and sentenced (in his absence though as he had already left for France) for his seditious writing- *Rights of Man*. Interestingly the argument given was that it was cheap in terms of price and intended to be used as a political tool in the hands of the masses. This pressure was also felt by radical publishers.

In the meantime, the change in the face of the revolution in France necessitated a reassessment of the aims and objectives of the revolution. Furthermore, the disconcerting September Massacres (1792), the execution of the King and Queen of France (1793), the reign of terror and war between England and France (1793) made it increasingly difficult for the radicals and the critics of the Pitt administration to sustain their celebration of the ideals of the revolution- the liberty, justice and equality. Godwin's *Political Justice* records these changes. While the 1793 version exudes optimism of the early phase of radicalism, in 1795 Godwin embarked on its large scale revision.

The relation between Godwin's thought as enshrined in *Political Justice* and the English radicalism of the 1790s can also be seen in terms of the role played by the legacy of English dissent that culminated in the *Political Justice*.

Heritage of Dissent

The origins of eighteenth century English Dissent can be found in the Puritan theology of the seventeenth century. The avowed aim of dissent was to demystify the Christian faith and to consider its tenets in accordance with human reason alone. It thus marked a shift from reliance upon external authority in moral matters to the internal authority of the self which is informed by reason. Parallel to this were the efforts to preserve the virtues of Christianity while adjusting them to a rational and scientific temper. There were many dissenting academies in contemporary England such as Daventry, Warrington, Hoxton, Hackney or Northampton. It was during the reign of George III that the radicalism of the Dissenters assumed a more active role in the affairs of national politics. They became increasingly political by the time the French Revolution broke out in 1789.

For Godwin, nothing was more productive of vice than blind obedience to external authority. Hence government and law receive his most compelling censure in *Political Justice*.

Michael Scrivener informs that Godwin secularized "a notion from his Nonconformist heritage," and gave "the Puritan plain style anarchist twist, altering the emphasis for the sake of a pure and democratic humanism." The regeneration of society, for Godwin, was to be the result of a revolution in public opinion, guided by the tenets of sincerity, benevolence and rational discourse.

Having situated Godwin in this background, we now look at his arguments pertaining to the role of government and the concept of political justice. In order to understand them, it is necessary to consider briefly Godwin's interpretation of the writings of two authors whose influence is also evident in his text: Rousseau and Montesquieu.

Rousseau's idea that the vices of individuals arise out of the vices of governments was taken a step further by Godwin. For him, government in all its forms only inhibits intellectual independence. Another writer who shaped Godwin's concept of political justice was Montesquieu (1689-1755). Godwin responded to the extent to which Montesquieu appeared to favour a certain amount of geographical determinism in his analysis of the forms of government. This was natural for Montesquieu given his background as an anthropologist, wherein his political anthropology gave rise to his theories on government. But for Godwin, this was tantamount to inhibiting the natural growth of reason and love of liberty.

What explains Godwin's intellectual movement from an analysis of the vices of forms of government to an opposition to government *per se*? The progress of events in France, especially during the writing of *Political Justice* (September 1791 to January 1793) may well have sown the seeds of this transformation.

Godwin's basic proposition suggested that rational persuasion is the proper instrument of social and political progress, and that violence or coercion in any form is incompatible with the use of that instrument. However, when it came to applying this principle to concrete political problems, Godwin's ideas underwent modification. This is reflected in his statements on ideas of resistance and revolution. The chapters of *Political Justice* devoted to this topic, were completely rewritten in the light of contemporary political experiences. In 1793, when the first edition made its appearance, the French Revolution had not yet entered upon its oppressive phase, and was perceived as an expression of a desire for reforms. While emphasizing the general principle that

changes should be accomplished by rational persuasion rather than by coercion Godwin was able to present himself as a supporter of the revolutionary movement. By the time the final revised edition saw the light of the day, the violent character of the revolutionary regime had become fully apparent. He consequently eliminated all the passages which had suggested that the modern world was sufficiently enlightened to benefit by revolutionary action, and argued that revolutionary violence, by inflaming irrational passions and by interfering with the freedom of intellectual communication, can only hurt rather than help the cause of human progress. For Godwin, the excesses of the French Revolution came as a shock to the rationalist optimism, and led to a drastic reassessment of the power of what were now seen as non-rational forces.

Godwin's endorsement of the ideas of anarchism and his movement towards rejection of government is somewhere hinged on the gap between his radicalism and his disdain for popular political actions. His repudiation of activism was soon tested in the arena of Jacobin politics. As Isaac Kramnick notes, 1795 and 1796 saw a clash between Godwin's philosophical anarchism and the politics of radical agitation. The London Corresponding Society (L.C.S) existed as a popular outlet of public dissatisfaction. It comprised artisans, mainly hatters, bakers, grocers, booksellers, and shoemakers described as "the thinking part of the working people." The ideology of the group, shared by all reflected in its principles: annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and parliamentary reform. In May, 1794, Pitt's government tried the leaders of this society for treason. Late 1795 and early 1796 saw the introduction of Pitt's notorious Anti-Sedition Acts abrogating freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. Fearful for its survival, Pitt's Government was lashing back. Inflammatory tracts appeared at the same time with titles like *King Killing*, the *Reign of the English Robespierre*, or the *Happy Reign of George the Last*.

What was Godwin's response to this backlash? His position is found in his pamphlet, *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills Concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices and Unlawful Assemblies*, published anonymously by "a lover of order." The pamphlet begins with a general lecture on the principle of philosophical anarchy, as differentiated from false anarchy. For Godwin, organisations like the L.C.S (operating like the Jacobin Party in France) comprising such zealots posed a major threat to the security. Its immense multitude was antithetical to civil order. Godwin also went on to accuse its leader, Thelwall, of violating all

reasonable tenets of political life. What invites our attention is that Godwin was alarmed at the absence of "persons of eminence, distinction, and importance in the country," at the meetings organised by the L.C.S, who could temper the enthusiasm of those "not much in the habits of regular thinking." "What is it they desire? They know not. It would probably be easy to show that what they professed to desire is little better than what they hate" (Book I). This was certainly no less arrogant than Burke's depiction of the masses.

How did Godwin envisage the desirable social order? Despotism, power and force were inherently incapable of facilitating progress. The same was held for the clergy and aristocracy. The middle class composed of newly enriched commoners were ruled out as too selfish to be champions of reform. The only social group capable of facilitating human progress was then literary and intellectual elite. Kramnick notes that there was no doubt in Godwin's mind about who these people were. They were to be found in the literary and philosophical circle comprising Godwin, the circle of Holcroft and Godwin's wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, and that of Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Godwin's son-in-law, Shelley. Writing to a friend, Godwin had once unabashedly described himself and his correspondent as "of course among the few enlightened."

It was this uncanny confrontation between radical theory and pragmatic politics that led to the evolution of modern political attitudes. To Godwin's charge that in the politics of agitation and re-form, one "bids farewell to the patient lubrications of the philosopher, and the labour of the midnight oil", Thelwall responded through his *Tribune* that, on the contrary:

"It is in the mixed and crowded audiences in theatres and halls of assembly that the real lover of his species must principally expect to inspire that generous sympathy, that social ardour without which a nation is but a populous wilderness and the philosopher himself only a walking index of obsolete laws and dead-letter institutes" (xiv-xv).

Conclusion

Even today, while many react to the ills of society with a political response and like Thelwall seek political goals through political action, a smaller number, however, still cling to Godwin's philosophical response seeking betterment of society through education and enlightenment. One cannot deny that Godwin stands as the father of modern anarchist thought, one of the earliest to

think and write of society without government. But one also agrees with Kramnick that the political discourse after Godwin is torn between the liberal values of individuality, independence, and self-determination, on the one hand, and the non liberal values of community, solidarity, and the encouragement of virtue through social pressure, on the other. This is not to say that the *Political Justice* or any such work of huge socio-political ramifications is fractured in its ideas but a reinforcement of the fact that ideas may arise and alter with political contingencies. William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* thus mirrors altering phases of a revolution and a revolutionary mind.

Works Cited

- Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. (1790) Stilwell: Digireads.com Publishing, 2005. Print.
- Butler, Marilyn. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.
- Claeys, Gregory. "The Concept of 'Political Justice' in Godwin's Political Justice: A Reconsideration." *Political Theory*. Vol.11. (Nov.1983), pp. 565-584. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 March. 2014.
- Godwin, William. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*. (1793). London: G.G.J and J Robinson, *Google Book Search*. Web. Dec 2010.
- . *Things As They Are or the Adventures of Caleb Williams*. (1794). Ed. George Sherburn. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960. Print.
- Hazlitt, William. "The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits." London: Henry Colburn, 1825. *Google Book Search*. Web. 25 March. 2014.
- Kramnick, Isaac. *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*. New York: Basic Books, 1977. Print.
- Kramnick, Isaac. "On Anarchism and the Real World: William Godwin and Radical England." *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 66. (Mar. 1972) pp.114-128. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 March. 2014.
- Lincoln, Anthony. *Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent, 1763-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938. Print.

Paine, Thomas. *Rights of Man*. Ed. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner. London: Watts & Co., 1906. Print.

Scrivener, Michael. "Godwin's Philosophy: A Revaluation." *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol. 39. (Oct-Dec. 1978) pp.615-626. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 March 2014.

Thelwall, John. *The Tribune*. II- xiv-xv. 1796. *Google Book Search*. Web. 25 March. 2014.

Watkins, Frederick M. "Review: Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*. Vol. 14. (Feb. 1948) pp.107-112. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 March. 2014.

**Mapping of Individual Perception onto Physical Geography:
A Reading of Blake's "London"**

Subrata Sahoo

Abstract: William Blake (1757-1827), a seminal poet and artist in the history of English poetry, who was largely unrecognized during his lifetime, was solicitous of the multitude of apocalyptic ideologies of his time which spread like wildfire among urban populations. No doubt, as a life-long city-dweller, Blake had a far more complicated relationship to the city of London. The poems of his celebrated volume entitled *Songs of Experience* (1794) no less form a platform through which we take ourselves into the streets, schoolrooms and chapels of the London city to see the effects of Empire on human mind. The poem "London", in particular, can be viewed as the microcosm of this specially-designed volume; and what I want to project through this paper is that how Blake's "London" provides a unique map of the fundamentals of city life, showing us what we cannot see with our open eyes.

Key Words: London, map, city-life, ideology, time, etc.

Blake's (1757-1827) lyrical poems in *Songs of Experience* (1794) are, in general, scathing in their criticism of the then prevailing spirit of London, the city that plays a key role in shaping and renovating his poetic imagination. The poems of this celebrated volume no less form a platform through which we take ourselves into the streets, schoolrooms and chapels of the London city to see the effects of Empire on human mind. The poem "London", in particular, is but a microcosm of this specially-designed volume and what I want to project through this paper is that how Blake's London provides a unique map of the fundamentals of city life, showing us what we cannot see with our open eyes. This small text of only sixteen lines can be read as the poet's singular experience of the city.

In his "London", the "mightiest brief poem" as Oliver Elton (1861-1945) has phrased it, Blake has used London city as a potent symbol of metropolitan catastrophe. He shows how the

transition of country values to city life gradually made London city as the centre of corruption and oppression. In his poem, London city has become a space that recognizes industrial London as a setting of corruption, prejudice, and oppression.

In fact, Blake has experienced direct and quick changes that occurred in London at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution and was mindful of the complex texture of 18th century urban life. Blake has exposed the multitude of apocalyptic ideologies of the time which spread like wildfire among urban populations. No doubt, as a life-long city-dweller, Blake had a far more complicated relationship to the city of London. Commenting on the relationship of Blake to the city, Jennifer Michael opines,

The city for Blake is not the absence or the negation of nature, but rather an unstable synthesis of human artifact and organic environment, both imaginatively constructed (19).

Obviously, Blake has painted a vivid picture of London in 1790s when the rapid transition in social, political and economic fields caused by the Industrial Revolution affected people in many ways:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe. (London)

Here, language and imagination conjoin to delineate the apocalyptic ideologies of London during 1790s. One such apocalyptic ideology is Urizen's rational philosophy. Urizen is one of the four Zoas (the other three being Urthona or Los, Luvah, and Tharmas) that result from the division of the primordial man, Albion, and he continues to represent reason. This rational philosophy is suggested through the word "charter'd". In point of fact, charters were provided as deeds to guilds with a view to ensure liberty of trade. But Blake was very much conscious of the manipulative dimension of the word because he has laid emphasis on the significance of materialism. Thomas Paine (1737-1809) has remarked in his *Rights of Man* (1791)-

It is a perversion of the term to say that a charter gives rights. It operates by a contrary effect, that of taking rights away (E-Book #3742).

So, the word carries specific Urizenic implications of constrictions and restrictions imposed on the common people of London by the capitalists. The poet has suggested that the-then London society provided privileges only to the rich businessmen who for the sake of their trade privately owned the streets and river of London. This capitalist society cares for a straw for the common people. This is, of course, the oppressive nature of early capitalism. The illustration of the poem also shows that a little vagabond is trying to keep warm and a little boy is seen to guide an old man on crutches past a closed door. Approaching of the old man towards a closed door is a powerful symbol of entrapment and entombment because here the door is but associated with

Death's Door. The repetition of the word "marks" is also emphatic. The word is used first as verb and then as noun. It is a visual image for the signs of sickness and misery of the common people. In this connection Prof. Subir Dhar opines,

In "London" the city is powerfully imagined as the locus of all human "weakness" and "woe" (130).

Therefore, the city London of 1790s became the genetic source of all troubles as if it were a living entity.

The feeling of entrapment and entombment, hinted at the first verse, prepares us for the picture of the city in chains in the second verse:

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice; in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

The sense of entrapment is absolutely suggested through the phrase "mind-forg'd manacles". The phrase literally means restraining cuffs made of metal devised by the mind of man to subjugate people by physical force. But the phrase is loaded with connotations. Prof. Dhar writes,

The phrase unites in a single image the affective impositions of the Urizenic ideology on both the human consciousness and its productive actions. The image of manacles constitutes a graphic realization of all the implications of constriction and imprisonment... (132).

Truly, the imprisonment in the city of London is the outcome of mental and imaginative oppression. In other words, the ideological frame is held responsible for oppression and exploitation. The very idea is presented also in "The Human Abstract":

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vein:
There grows one in the Human Brain.

Noticeably as presented in the poem, the city London is a slave of "mind-forg'd manacles", and this enslavement results in bringing forth two exploited classes of people—the chimney-sweeper and the soldier:

How the Chimney-sweepers cry

Every blackening Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Ruining blood down Palace walls.

The chimney and the soldier are two concrete symbols of human exploitation. During Blake's time, the boy sweep was a well-known figure. The rapid growth of industry in the last quarter of the eighteenth century felt the overwhelming need of a definite teenage group of children for sweeping chimneys emitting out smoke of the factories. Consequently, the city witnessed the boy chimney - sweepers. The church also witnessed it but remained indifferent. It is embellished with the colour "black" as it no attention to the suffering of the child- sweeps. The soldiers whose sigh "Runs in blood down palace walls" is another neglected class to suffer in the system of exploitation.

The corrupted city poisons even personal relationship at the deepest level, and this is the culmination of the poet's apocalyptic vision regarding the city London. Here, Blake has used the blight and plague of marriage hearse as a powerful metaphor:

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

That London city of 1790s was a world without bonds or relationship is suggested through the synecdochic symbol of the harlot. Like "mind-forg'd manacles", "marriage hearse" is a powerful phrase. This potent oxymoronic phrase hints at the unproductive death-in-life state of marriage-life. The marriage sacrament is implicitly compared to the vehicle of death and separation; owing to the ever-increasing materialistic mind and social corruption, love has been perverted into sex; the harlot who has been forced to choose the job of prostitution is robbed of her chance to love her baby as the marriage has become the graveyard of love.

Thus, Blake draws the map of London with words and picture. The audio-visual images contributing to the architectonic merit of the poem help us to study the poem-cum map and extract its meaning. The alternate juxt-apposition of both the auditory and visual images does not only make the poem artistically attractive but also make us realize how Blake crops with his feeling, sight and insight to present the picture of the City in threat. His individual perception about the status quo of the city makes him a map-maker and his poem "London" a map, a fissure, a node through which the true nature of London society of 1790s can be glimpsed.

Notes

1. All references of Blake's poems are from *William Blake: Selected Poems*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by G.E.Bentley,JR. Penguin Books, 2005.

Works Cited

Dhar, Subir. *Burning Bright: William Blake and the Poetry of Imagination*. Kolkata: G. J. Book Society, 2001. Print.

Michael, Jennifer Davis. *Blake and the City*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2006. Print.

Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was published in 1791. But I have extracted the quote from the E-Book version entitled *The Writing of Thomas Paine*, Vol-II, Release Date: February 7,2010,(E-Book#3742), ISO-8859-1, browsed on 09/06/2014 in www.gutenberg.org.

Other Echoes Inhabit the Garden: Re-reading Nineteenth Century British Romantic Poetry

Sankar Prasad Singha

Abstract: The word “romantic” is used in a variety of cultural contexts to mean a widely different things. But in general reading the emotional aspect of romanticism is foregrounded to the exclusion of other equally important dimensions. Yet the most scholarly developments in the last quarters of the twentieth century relate to the poststructuralist, new historicist and feminist readings of romantic literature. If deconstruction exposes the conceptual tensions and contradictions in the romantic texts , new historicism focuses on the political sub-texts . Indeed, the concern with the interiority of the individual mind and the celebration of subjectivity in romanticism is explained in terms of the disillusionment with the socio-political developments of the time .The abandonment of radicalism by the first generation of romantic poets has been criticised even by the second generation romantic poets . Feminist readings , on the other hand, hold that Nature in romantic poetry is always characterised as feminine but the feminine there is confined merely to the level of sensory perceptions. In contradistinction to the sensory the spiritual is always presented as the masculine and that is shown to be of fundamental significance .Thus divergent echoes inhabit the garden of romantic literature.

Keywords: Post structuralist, new historicist, feminist, sub-text, echoes, contradistinction, humanitarian sympathy

Even the most seasoned scholar faces a problem with the word ‘romantic’ because of the many meanings associated with the word. More intriguing perhaps is the fact that these meanings are often vague and ill-distinguished from each other. The word is used in a variety of cultural

contexts covering a wide time-scale. Besides, it suggests a notion, a tide of feelings and a set of expressive attitudes with application in almost every form of art – literature, painting, music etc. However, as a chronological label, it is used to describe the imaginative literature of the early part of the nineteenth century. In fact, it flourished during one of the most momentous epochs, of western cultural history. Margaret Drabble in the fifth edition of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1985) describes Romanticism as:

“...a literary movement and a profound shift in sensibility which took place in Britain and throughout Europe roughly between 1770 and 1848. Intellectually it marked a violent reaction to the Enlightenment. Politically it was inspired by the revolutions in America and France... Emotionally it expressed an extreme assertion of the self and the value of individual experience... socially it championed progressive causes...” (842-43)

It is a brilliant summary of the fundamental aspects of Romanticism from multiple perspectives.

But in general reading the emotional aspect of Romanticism is foregrounded and in the classroom we lay emphasis on the uniqueness of individual experience, its universal value, its concern with nature and mysticism. The title of this paper, taken from Eliot’s “Burnt Norton” intends to draw attention to the possible other readings of Romantic poetry. In fact, the most striking critical and scholarly developments over the last quarter of the twentieth century that have radically altered our ideas about Romantic poetry relate to Deconstruction, New Historicism and Feminism. Deconstructive criticism of Romantic poetry exposes unsuspected conceptual tensions and contradictions in a poem. As Tilottama Rajan says, “...to deconstruct a text . . . is to assume that it is a disunified and contradictory structure tacitly involved in contesting its own meaning.”(16). She impressively analyses a number of Romantic poems to focus on the fragmentation of personal identity which renders the poems incapable of producing any coherent signification. David Simpson’s *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the*

Real (1982) provides another sensitive post – structuralist reading of Romantic poetry in general and Wordsworth's poetry in particular.

Simpson argues that in Wordsworth the more that the real is recognised as the 'figured', the more important it becomes to keep in play as many figurings as possible. Thus he tries to show us the strategies through which Wordsworth tries to avoid the premature closing off of possible signification. In the process the poem foregrounds multiple conflicting figurings to people of different backgrounds. Thus emerges a sort of endlessly complex distinctive qualities rendering the text open-ended. Concomitant with this kind of reading is a tendency to favour *ur-texts*, to print the earliest, sometimes incomplete versions of texts. We may refer to Stephen Gill's *William Wordsworth* (OUP, 1984) which makes it a point to present a rougher, more provisional Wordsworth by including the skeletal early versions of many poems. This also goes a long way in dismantling the old stabilities of Wordsworth's finally approved texts.

Similarly, the last quarter of the previous century has also seen a number of illuminating studies on Romantic literature from the feminist perspectives. The most significant name here is that of Anne K. Mellor whose two books are of seminal importance – *Romanticism and Feminism* (1988) and *Romanticism and Gender* (1993). It is argued that Nature in Romantic poetry is characterised as feminine but the 'feminine' there is confined merely to the level of sensory perceptions. The feminine is never presented as being of ultimate importance in itself; it merely facilitates the sublime moment of apprehension which is always represented as male. There is no doubt that in Wordsworth's poetry sensory experiences always lead to a mystical illumination. If sensory perception is represented as feminine and the moment of transcendental illumination stands for the masculine, then the masculine is unmistakably privileged over the feminine. Natural objects are always presented by Wordsworth as symbolic of some higher meaning; higher than what they would ordinarily mean in the actual world. The visionary experience of a sublime force always follows the descriptive passage about nature in *The Prelude*. In fact, this is a principle that pervades the whole of *The Prelude* in which we find a recurring pattern: Wordsworth describes an incident and then recollects the imaginative insight that it induced. Wordsworth uses the expression 'spots of time' to describe such key

experiences which remain within us as a resource from which we can obtain restoration and renewal. He suggests that these 'spots of time' are scattered everywhere but are particularly to be found in childhood. Wordsworth explicitly identifies only two incidents in *The Prelude* as 'spots of time' – one occurred when he was five years old and described in Book-XI, (ll. 279-326) while the other took place when he was thirteen and described also in book XI (ll. 345-389). Although these two incidents have been explicitly described, it will be fair to apply the term to the poem's other episodes of imaginative intensity. Thus in Book I we may refer to such episodes as the robbing of snares, the raven's nest and the stolen boat which result in visionary perceptions. In all such incidents our sensory faculties play a part but they are subordinate to imaginative power. So in *The Prelude* feminine nature is not of fundamental significance; that is reserved for the spiritual, the transcendental which in contradistinction to the feminine is always presented as the masculine.

This is true not merely about *The Prelude* but this applies to all Wordsworth's major poems. In fact, Wordsworth is interested not so much in celebrating the beauty of the natural objects as in celebrating the power of the observing mind over the objects perceived. Thus in "Tintern Abbey" the opening verse paragraph (ll.1-22) conforms to the approach of a traditional poet celebrating the beauty of nature which is uncharacteristic of Wordsworth. We find here a pictorial description of a rural scene but on closer analysis it is revealed that the landscape is a projection of the poet's own mood. Ultimately Wordsworth goes on to describe an intense moment of sublime apprehension in which he is aware not of the material forms of nature but of an inner life force which permeates the world of nature. Communing with this spiritual reality he is not even aware of his material self:

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul... (ll. 44-47 113)

At such moments the poet is released from all material doubts and worries; experiences a profound understanding of the nature of things. The account of this 'blessed mood' recalls other descriptions of visionary experience as in *The Prelude*. The point will be clearer if one compares

the poetic treatment of nature in Wordsworth with the description of nature in Dorothy's *Journals* of 1798 and 1800–1803. Her *Journals* record nature in a way that genuinely allows nature a life of its own. She never imposes meaning on nature; rather she allows a sort of autonomy to natural life. This refusal to find infinite and eternal meanings in the objects of nature has been interpreted by feminist critics like Margaret Homans as an act of subversion by Dorothy of her brother's overweening male attempt to impose meanings on experience. In fact, the visible world in Dorothy's *Journals*, in contrast to her brother William Wordsworth's, gathers a sort of power and luminosity. Meena Alexander has pointed out that the women writers of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth centuries often turned away "from the abstractions or the high sublimity of their male counterparts, to the concrete acts of nurture and care associated with maternity" (68). In fact, the concreteness of Dorothy Wordsworth's interest in nature and her rejection of the sublime runs distinctly counter to William Wordsworth's interest in the abstraction of masculinised sublimity. Feminists have argued that a comparable point can be made about the writings of other Romantic poets including Blake, Shelley and Keats.

Whereas deconstruction exposes the conceptual tensions and contradictions in a text, new historicism asserts that every writer's position and attitude is determined by specific socio-economic developments. The most wide-ranging and influential exponent of this school studying Romantic poetry is probably Marilyn Butler whose *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background, 1760-1830* provides a classic example. We must not forget that the period in which Wordsworth and his fellow Romantic poets wrote was one of great political and economic upheaval. Politically, it was a time of revolutions in America and France; in Britain revolution was averted but the demand for constitutional change eventually resulted in the Reform Act of 1832. Economically, it was the period of industrial Revolution which made the society increasingly more reliant upon mass production. This brought about a shift of population towards the factories of the North and the Midlands. Agricultural revolution in the countryside resulted in a steady erosion of the small and independent landholders. This background of massive social and economic change has to be borne in mind in understanding Romantic poetry. A considerable segment of contemporary theory seeks to foreground these issues and focus mainly upon the socio-political dimension of a text. Even a poet like Keats who is generally looked upon as an aesthete, received extensive attention paid to the political sub-text

of his writings. Let me refer to one periodical and one book to substantiate my point. *Studies in Romanticism*, an important journal on the period brought out a special number on “Keats and Politics” (Vol. XXV, Number 2) in 1986. Daniel P. Watkins published a book entitled *Keats’s Poetry and the Politics of the Imagination* in 1989.

In fact, social concern and humanitarian sympathy was part of the groundswell of radical political feeling in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This is clearly evident in many of Wordsworth’s early poems. There is, for instance, Wordsworth’s “The Female Vagrant”. A version of this poem forms a part of a longer work *Salisbury Plain* which was initially composed though not published in 1793-1794. The speaker in the poem, the female vagrant recounts how her father, a poor cottager, was driven out of his property by a wealthy and acquisitive neighbour. Initially the cottager refused to sell his “old hereditary nook” to the wealthy neighbour. Consequently he was subjected to much cruelty and hardship:

His troubles grew upon him day by day,
Till all his substance fell into decay.
His little range of water was denied;
All but the bed where his old body lay,
All, all was seized, and weeping side by side,
We sought a home where we uninjured might abide.

(11.49-54, p.46)

One notices a remarkable similarity with Upen’s condition as narrated in Tagore’s “Dui Bigha Jami”. Like the father of this female vagrant in Wordsworth’s poem Upen was also robbed of his own small plot of land to become a vagrant without an abode of his own. Wordsworth’s early radicalism is also evident in his spirited plea for the extension of voting right to every individual. In a letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, Wordsworth wrote in 1793: “If there is a single man in Great Britain who has no suffrage in the election of a representative, the will of the society of which he is a member is not generally expressed.” (qtd. Gardiner 27). It is surprising that the same Wordsworth in an anonymous pamphlet, *Address to the Freeholders of Westmorland* written before the general election of 1818 argued against the parliamentary reforms and pleaded for restricting franchise only to those who owned property. But that is a different story which is in keeping with Wordsworth’s growing conservatism and it will be discussed later. The first antislavery society in England was formed by the Quakers in 1783 and in the 1790s one notices

a large number of anti-slavery poems. William Blake's "The Little Black Boy" stresses the equality of souls between a black boy and a white English boy. Robert Southey (1774-1843) wrote in 1794 a series of sonnets protesting against the institution of slavery. In 1799 William Campbell complained against slavery in *The Pleasures of Hope*. Anti-slavery sentiment became common in the magazine poetry of the time as well. Ultimately slavery was abolished throughout British colonies by an act of Parliament in 1833. The claim for equal rights for women was also voiced during this period in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792.

Thus indignation at the injustices of contemporary society and a strong commitment to progressive social causes inform the early poems of the so called Lake poets at the initial stage. It is against the backdrop of the indignation at social injustices that one has to understand the growing concern with the interiority of the individual mind in later years. The celebration of subjectivity is a reaction against the increasing mechanisation and the consequent evil generated by it. Another important cause behind the emergence of the concern with the interiority of the individual mind in romantic poetry was the disillusionment with the developments of the French revolution. In his *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1971) M. H. Abrams writes : "For Wordsworth and his contemporaries ... the millennium did not come. The millennial pattern of thinking, however, persisted, with this difference: the external means was replaced by an internal means for transforming the world." (334) What Abrams suggests here is that the socio-political energy was transformed into internal or spiritual energy owing to the despair born out of the failure of the French Revolution. In other words the salvation that was denied in the real world was sought to be achieved in the inner world of the individual mind. This is an idea which has been treated in different ways by a large number of commentators on Romantic literature since the 1950s. This shift of focus from society and practical politics to the mind of a single individual may be viewed as an evasion of the engagement with the socio-political reality. In fact, one of the lines of development traced in the autobiographical narrative of *The Prelude* is Wordsworth's gradual shift from external to internal modes of fulfilment. Wordsworth tells us how he had enthusiastically supported the cause of the French Revolution:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times...

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights.

(X , 692-93 & 697)

But disillusionment soon struck him and he turned for consolation to the contemplation of the depths of his own mind. This shift from the social to the individual mode of fulfilment stands in sharp contrast to Wordsworth's recollection in the tenth Book of *The Prelude* that those who supported the French revolution at its outset were no utopian idealists but people who knew:

...the ugly world which is the world

Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,

We find our happiness, or not at all. (X, 11.725-27)

This shift from the problems of the real world to an apprehension of an illusory, invisible world may be said to represent a conservative, even reactionary attitude. In fact, the spiritual fulfilment that *The Prelude* as a whole endorses can be viewed as a conservative evasion of the social and political responsibility. Political conservatism becomes more explicit in Wordsworth's later poem, *The Excursion*. Against hopes for 'social man' the Wanderer asserts that true fulfilment is to be found in retreating from society and in holding 'faith absolute in God' (IV, 22). Not only that, the orthodox christian faith is even couched in an imperialist rhetoric. The Wanderer feels that the world will look up to Britain for leadership and Britain must have to be sure about her glorious future. Britain must think about her imperial duty of teaching those who are born to serve her. The poem thus expresses a sort of imperial rhetoric which anticipates Kipling's famous phrase 'The White Man's Burden'. In fact, there seems to exist a definite connection between Romanticism and imperialism which has been excellently examined in Marlon B. Ross's article "Romantic Quest and Conquest". The article is included in *Romanticism and Feminism* edited by Anne K. Mellor and published in 1988 by Indiana University Press. Not surprisingly, when Shelley and Mary Shelley read *The Excursion* in September, 1814 they were much disappointed. Mary wrote in her Journal: "Shelley brings home Wordsworth's "Excursion", of which we read a part, much disappointed. He is a slave." (Jones 15) Wordsworth's unstated conservatism has been examined in greater detail by Marjorie Levinson who tries to trace this conservatism even in some of the well-known poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*. In her book *Wordsworth's Period Poems : Four Essays* (1986) she makes an elaborate examination of the famous poem "Tintern Abbey". She argues that although the full title of the poem is "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye,

During a Tour, July 13, 1798”, there is no description of the abbey in the poem. The mention of the abbey in the title raises the expectation that the poem would describe the ruined monastery. Indeed, the institutionally religious place was still a potential space for meditation and hence had a very significant value for Wordsworth. But in 1798 the abbey was also associated with something very different. It had become a shelter for a large number of homeless vagrants, people who had become dispossessed because of the growing industrialisation around the area. Thus the once spiritual retreat had turned into a retreat for the destitute and denoted a problematic social reality which Wordsworth was unwilling to acknowledge. This explains, according to Levinson, why the abbey is advertised in the title but avoided in the poem itself. Thus Wordsworth seems to be more concerned with achieving an erasure of unpleasant social reality. To quote Levinson, “the primary poetic action is the suppression of the social....The success of the visionary poem turns on its ability to hide... the historical.” (39). But in spite of all such attempts there is at least one point where Wordsworth seems to register the dispossessed population of the Tintern area. At the end of the opening description of the landscape, he notes,

.....these pastoral farms
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.

(ll. 17-22, 112)

Wordsworth notices the smoke and is aware of the vagrant dwellers but seeks to obfuscate the whole issue by equating the vagrants with the hermits. What Wordsworth seems to forget is that hermits choose their poverty whereas vagrants have to suffer it in spite of themselves. What is happening in the poem, Levinson argues, is a shift in Wordsworth's thought, a shift away from the radical political position of the early 1790's. In fact, this kind of reading tries to underscore that “Tintern Abbey”, dramatises a contrast between Wordsworth's early radical political attitudes and the late socially evasive and inwardly focussed conservative thoughts.

This kind of shift from the liberal to the conservative thought was not confined to Wordsworth alone. Paul Hamilton points out that in Coleridge one notices a movement towards

“orthodoxy in religion and conservatism in politics” (186). Robert Southey also evinces the same kind of change. His first Laureate verse, “Carmen Triumphale for the Commencement of the Year 1814” was a celebration of British victories against Napoleon. The poem eulogizes the British state as the saviour of the world because it succeeded in defeating Napoleon. The poem seeks to establish that Britain “fought the battles of mankind” alone. Most of the second generation Romantic poets expressed their frustration at the abandonment of radicalism by these poets. The most pungent attack probably is to be found in the “Dedication” to *Don Juan* by Byron. Responding to the reactionary attitude of these poets, Byron writes –

Bob Southey! You're a poet – Poet Laureate,
..... you turned out a Tory at
Last, - Yours has lately been a common case.
And now my Epic Renegade! What are ye at?
With all the Lakers, in and out of place?
.....
Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,
.....
Explaining metaphysics to the nation-
I wish he would explain his explanation
And Wordsworth, in a rather long “Excursion”
Has given a sample from the vasty version
Of his new system to perplex the sages... (635)

One may also recall how Shelley reacted to Wordsworth’s anonymous pamphlet, *Address to the Freeholders of Westmorland* (1818): “What a beastly and pitiable wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet!” Keats shared Shelley’s disappointment when he came to know that Wordsworth was working for Sir William Lowther, the Earl of Lonsdale against the Whig candidate Brougham in the general election of 1818. Keats exclaimed – “Wordsworth versus Brougham! Sad-sad-sad!” (qtd. in Gardiner 17). The reader may even recall Browning’s lamentation in “The Lost Leader”:

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick to his coat” (Harrison 375)

It, therefore, goes without saying that Romantic poetry can not and should not be read merely in terms of its concern with nature and the interiority of the individual mind. The concern with language and its ultimate vacuity, the concern with gender, the conflict between political radicalism and political reaction, the conflict between the claims of the individual and the claims of the community – inform much of the interpretation of what is known as Romantic literature. It is not surprising that the literature of the period has been ceaselessly reinterpreted and different echoes inhabit the garden of Romantic poetry.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: Norton & Co., 1973. Print.
- Alexander, Meena *Women in Romanticism*. London: Macmillan, 1989. Print.
- Byron, Lord, *Poetical Works*. Ed. Frederick Page. Oxford: OUP, 1970. Print.
- Day, Aiden. *Romanticism*. London : Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Drabble, Margaret (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (5th edition). Oxford: OUP, 1985. Print.
- Gardiner, Alan. *The Poetry of William Wordsworth* . Penguin Books, 1987. Print.
- Hamilton, Paul, *Coleridge's Poetics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983. Print.
- Harrison, G.B.(ed.). *A Book of English Poetry*. Penguin Books, 1950. Print.
- Jones, Frederick (ed.). *Mary Shelley's Journal*. Oklahoma U. Press, 1947. Print.
- Levinson, Marjorie. *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems : Four Essays*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986. Print.
- Rajan, Tilottama. *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism*. Cornell U. Press, 1980. Print.
- Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. Ed. W.J.B. Owen. OUP, 1969. Print.
- *The Prelude*. Ed. Ernest De Selincourt. OUP, 1970. Print.
- The Salisbury Plain Poems of William Wordsworth*. Ed. Stephen Gill. Cornell Univ. Press, 1975. Print.

Re-reading “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” as a ‘human tale’

Joyjit Ghosh

Abstract: “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, often considered the masterpiece of S.T. Coleridge, provoked an eddy of criticism almost immediately after its publication. Perhaps among Coleridge’s contemporaries it was only Charles Lamb who appreciated the poem with understanding. In the appreciative words of Lamb, it is a “human tale”. The present paper attempts to explore how the representation of a distinct “human interest” (Coleridge’s phrase in *Biographia Literaria*) to which the supernatural elements of the poem are fairly subordinated, make “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” a classic of its own kind.

Key Words: Human, supernatural, imagination, dream, tale

Matthew Arnold begins “The Study of Poetry” with these words:

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay.¹

Arnold had his own idea of a 'classic' and he believed that poetry of 'high destinies' would 'console' and 'sustain' mankind with the passage of time. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, often considered the masterpiece of S.T. Coleridge, may not have 'high destinies' in the Arnoldian sense but the excellence of the poem lies in its impassioned expression of a human destiny to which the supernatural is time and again subordinated.

Coleridge's poem provoked almost a uniformly hostile reception from the contemporary critics. It was called "the strangest story of a cock and bull that we ever saw on paper."² Perhaps among Coleridge's contemporaries it was only Charles Lamb who appreciated the poem with understanding. He wrote: "For me, I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days."³ The title of my paper uses the phrase of Lamb, 'human tale', and the present paper attempts to explore how the representation of human interest in the poem makes “The Ancient Mariner” a classic of its kind.

The phrase ‘human interest’, however, is not mine. It is Coleridge’s and it constitutes a cardinal element of the discourse on his endeavours as a romantic poet:

In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a *human interest* and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. (Coleridge 190-91)

[emphasis added]

This is a celebrated and oft-quoted passage from *Biographia Literaria*. Obviously, the most loaded phrase in the passage is “willing suspension of disbelief”. Whenever we discuss Coleridge’s brand of supernatural poetry we take recourse to it. But scarcely we look at the phrase “human interest” from a critical perspective. We either ignore it altogether or give it a cursory glance. But a close analysis of the poem reveals that in order to penetrate its mystery and meaning we have to understand the gravity of this phrase.

Wordsworth in *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* writes: “The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions.” He writes further:

Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height; and in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. (Wordsworth 176-77)

Wordsworth makes this statement with reference to the debated issue of poetic diction as he vindicates “a selection of the real language of men” for poetry (Wordsworth 162). Coleridge equivocates on the use of the word ‘real’ and his contention is that the word ‘real’ is at best elusive and misleading (Coleridge BL 208-9). But if we keep aside this debate on diction between Wordsworth and Coleridge we will see that on one basic point these two senior Romantic poets agree: both of them believe in the authentic expression of human thoughts and human feelings, both of them are basically concerned with human destiny in their poems.

Let us now look at the text. The poem has seven parts and has an epical scope. And when we plunge into the poem we find that the narration of the Mariner has a joyous beginning:

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top. (Part I. ll. 21 - 24)

The Mariner thus engages the wedding guest (who at one level of interpretation represents the readers) in his tale and as the Part I concludes we find that the albatross, which appeared as a bird of

good omen, is wilfully shot down by the Mariner. All on a sudden the fair breeze stops blowing and the crew burst into a silent sea :

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down

'Twas sad as sad could be;

And we did speak only to break

The silence of the sea! (Part II. ll. 107-110)

The note of exclamation with which the stanza concludes makes the atmosphere thoroughly claustrophobic and what intensifies the gloom of the scene is the appearance of a 'bloody sun' in 'a hot and copper sky'. The mariners are caught in a stasis, and worse than that, they are caught in a thirst-ridden situation:

Water, Water, everywhere,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, Water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink. (Part II. 11-119-122)

At this juncture Maurice Bowra succinctly writes:

The Mariner and his comrades are hardly characters in any dramatic sense. They lack lineaments and personality. But perhaps this is well, since what touches us in them is the basic humanity of their sufferings. They are more types than differentiated human beings, and for this reason their agonies are simply and universally human. (Bowra 60 - 61)

The observation is compelling. This is how Coleridge evokes in us a human interest. We feel in our inmost hearts that these mariners are our fellow-beings and their agonies are ours. Thus out of desperation when the Mariner bites his own arm and sucks blood a cold shiver runs down our spine. We seem to cry aloud but we are possessed by fear. And we feel like echoing the words of the Mariner himself:

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life-blood seemed to sip! (Part III. ll. 204-205)

The personification of fear and the imagination that Fear sips the life-blood from the cup of the Mariner's heart — all contribute to a chilling effect. Interestingly, the element of fear sometimes lurks in the description of nature where nature is sublimated and touches the border of the supernatural:

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:

At one stride comes the dark;

With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,

Off shot the specter-bark. (Part III ll. 199-202)

So the sun is down and darkness rushes in. At this point one may be reminded of those lines in *Macbeth* where the hero engages in a soliloquy:

Good things of Day begin to droop and drowse,

Whiles Night's black agents to their preys do rouse. (Act III, Sc.II, ll. 52-53)

The black agents of night in "The Ancient Mariner" —Death and Life-in-Death—rouse to their victims as darkness settles. Death claims the lives of all the sailors except our narrator who falls a prey to Life-in-Death. But the question arises: are all the things of day depicted in the poem good? Perhaps not. The 'bloody sun' is a case in point. It may very well symbolize the bloody crime of the Mariner.

Coleridge once wrote:

The best part of human languageis derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal laws, to processes and results of imagination. (Coleridge 207)

The killing of the albatross did haunt the imagination of the poet and the 'bloody sun' which is far from being a 'fixed symbol' does serve the poet's purpose brilliantly well. It helps the readers internalize the gravity of the Mariner's crime, and at the same time, it forecasts the agony he is doomed to suffer. The Mariner bears witness to the death of his comrades. He discovers a curse in their stony gaze. But the tragedy is, he cannot die like them. He looks to heaven and tries to pray. But at best he can produce a 'wicked whisper'. All these are vivid examples of a ghostly shudder passing through the medium of human feelings. The phrase 'wicked whisper' is, indeed loaded, and it speaks volumes about the angst of a man who wantonly pours the sweet milk of concord into Hell, who uproars the universal peace and confounds all unity on earth.⁴ Herein lies the point of resemblance between the Mariner and Cain. In the Bible Cain killed Abel, his brother, and as a consequence was cursed to wander the earth for the rest of his life (Genesis 4 : 1-16). By killing the albatross, his sweet companion, the Mariner is cursed to survive among his dead comrades in 'the rotting deck', looking upon 'the rotting sea' full of slimy things.

Unlike Cain the Mariner, however, is liberated from his curse when he appreciates the water snakes in the moonlight and blesses them unaware. The kind saint pities him. And by the grace of the Holy Mother he is refreshed/redeemed with rain. At this point dream has an important role to play :

The silly buckets on the deck,

That had so long remained,

I dreamt that they were filled with dew;

And when I awoke, it rained. (Part V. ll. 297-300).

Keats wrote, "The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream, —he awoke and found it truth." By the Coleridgean imagination, which is synthetic and magical, dream and truth become one in "The

Ancient Mariner". But what is most touching here is the description of the elementary human feelings as the Mariner's thirst is slaked with rain water :

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank. (Part V. 301-304)

So ultimately "The Ancient Mariner" emerges as a human tale. It depicts both supernatural horrors and superterrestrial visions. It includes both ghosts and angelic troops as characters. But it is remembered by all of us as a tale of a human being, who after an exile from human society for seven days, burdened with experiences of ghostly as well as miraculous ventures, finally comes back home. His joy finds its most passionate expression as he sees the 'familiar boundaries':

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light house top I see?
Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree? (Part VI. ll. 464-467)

A sensitive reader thus seems to share the Mariner's 'delirium of delight.'⁵ The poem concludes with a moral :

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small:
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (Part VII. ll. 614-617)

We may debate over the justification of this moral but we cannot afford to call it too palpable a design for "it", to quote the words of Humphry House, "has been lived." (House 220) —lived by the Mariner as well as by the wedding guest who listens to the Mariner's 'rime' with rapt attention and by internalizing it emerges "a sadder and a wiser man" at the end of the poem. Shelley wrote in "A Defence of Poetry", "The great secret of morals is love" (Shelley 233). Through the poignant perception of love the Mariner at last transcends his small orbit and integrates himself with "man and bird and beast" – that is the entire eco-system, and thereby attaches a dominant human interest to his tale.

- [A modified version of the paper presented at the UGC sponsored State Level Seminar titled "A Re-reading of British Romantic Literature" on 9 December 2011 organized jointly by the Dept. of English, Y.S. Palapra Mahavidyalaya and Mahishadal Raj College, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal]

Notes

All references to the text are from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ed. V. Sachithanandan, Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1979.

1. This is from Matthew Arnold's Introduction to *Poetry: Poets, Dramatists, Novelists in The Hundred Greatest Men*, 8 Vols. (London, 1880), Vol. I. This statement is quoted by Arnold himself at the opening of "The Study of Poetry" in *English Critical Texts : 16th Century to 20th Century*, ed. with Notes and an Appendix of Classical Extracts by D.J.Enright and Ernst de Chickera. Delhi: O.U.P, 1962, p. 260.
2. See *Coleridge: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J.R. de J. Jackson (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 56.
3. See *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, Vol. I, ed. E.V. Lucas (New Heaven : Yale UP, 1935), p. 240
4. The phrases are largely taken from Malcolm's speech in *Macbeth*, Act. IV, Sc.III, 11 97—99.
5. I am indebted to Srikumar Banerjee for this idea. Please see *Studies in the Poetry of Coleridge and Keats*, (Calcutta: A Mukherjee & Co. Pvt. Ltd, 1965), p. 45. The phrases 'familiar boundaries' and 'delirium of delight' are quoted from the argument of Prof. Banerjee in this context.

Works Cited:

- Bowra, Maurice, *The Romantic Imagination*, Oxford: O.U.P, 1950. Print.
- Coleridge, S.T. "Biographia Literaria". *English Critical Texts : 16th Century to 20th Century*. Ed. with Notes and an Appendix of Classical Extracts by D.J.Enright and Ernst de Chickera. Delhi: O.U.P, 1962. Print.
- House, Humphry. "The Ancient Mariner". In *English Romantic Poets : Modern Essays in Criticism*. Ed. M. H. Abrams. O.U.P., 1975. Print.
- Shelley, P.B. "A Defence of Poetry". *English Critical Texts : 16th Century to 20th Century*. Ed. with Notes and an Appendix of Classical Extracts by D.J.Enright and Ernst de Chickera. Delhi: O.U.P, 1962. Print.
- Wordsworth, William, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'. In *English Critical Texts. 16th Century to 20th Century*, ed. with Notes and an Appendix of Classical Extracts by D.J.Enright and Ernst de Chickera. Delhi: O.U.P, 1962. Print.

Gendered Politics of Gaze in Browning's 'My Last Duchess'

Srabanti Mukherjee

Abstract: Victorian era of British history saw unprecedented increase and growth in every sphere of British society- demographic increase, cultural growth, literary achievements, artistic growth etc. and this era had given birth to the psychological critic, thinker, moralist, and a great poet Robert Browning. His most well known dramatic monologue "My Last Duchess" has the brilliant potentiality of a short story in verse and it depicts a story of how a ruthless Duke killed his wife. But in this telling of a simple story there lies a gendered politics of gaze which is used to suppress the Duchess and the women in general. The theory of gaze is not a well defined critical theory or movement but it builds on and incorporates at the same time a number of traditional literary concerns. The power to look at has made men more powerful and women more submissive as they don't have such power. Men not only subordinates the female members through their power to look at but also cut up all the possible means of human communication by not giving them the right to look at anything they like. In the present poem "My Last Duchess" also how "the gaze" has been used as a weapon of patriarchy (represented by the Duke) for female subordination (represented by the last Duchess and would be Duchess) and male domination is the main concern of this paper.

Key words: Gaze, Male domination, Repression of women, Panopticon

The Industrial Revolution, political fermentation and progress in science brought about great social changes in Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), a period which is popularly known as the Victorian Age in the history of British English literature. Robert Browning was one of the most sensible poets in the self defining genre of Victorian poetry. Though his journey began under the influence of the romantic Shelley, Byron and Keats, he experimented with many forms of poetry and ultimately became the happiest when he melts his

intellectual vigor in his emotional feelings. Reading minutely his poetry, we can find three Brownings: Browning the passionate singer of love and youth and the world of sense, Browning the curious investigator of the tricky by ways of human experience and mind, Browning the fighter and valiant believer in the imperishable greatness of the soul of man. His dramatic monologues explore the extreme morbid states of human mind; actually they are psychological exploration of the abnormal states of mind of the characters of his poems. "My Last Duchess" (1842), probably the most widely known of Browning's dramatic monologues, is the main concern of this paper. The poem is not only an excellent observation of psychological poetry through a complex relationship between characters but also captures power play and gender politics of the society. But there is something in the poem which is used in different ways to explore the patriarchal politics and that main weapon is the "eyes". The application and operation of eyes and sights become the main essence of "My Last Duchess" which is exemplified through the various types of words used in the text like "looking", "look", "looks", "looked", "notice", "glance", "pictured", "painted". In the standard formulation men look and women are looked at. The owner of gaze has the power and this gendered relation of gaze to men and women is a product of patriarchy. The system of looks or gaze in "My Last Duchess" which Browning deals with to present the social power relation (the power exercised by men over women) is the main topic of analysis of my paper.

Apparently the poem is about a duke, the fifth Duke of Ferrara who has killed his wife, Lucrezia because he is displeased with her. The poem begins in medias res with the arrival of the envoy of the Count who has brought the proposal of a marriage between the widower Duke and the daughter of the Count. The whole story is spoken by the Duke thereafter to the silent envoy whose presence is understood only through the speech of the Duke. At the first scene of the dramatic beginning the Duke points to a portrait of his wife on the wall: "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall... I call that piece a wonder now". Through the Duke's visualization the Duchess is just a customary "show-piece", a mere visual object to be objectified whose aim in life should be to "decorate" her husband's life as she "decorates" his wall. Freud in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) associates what he terms "scopophilia", with "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (Waugh 510). The use of the adjective "last" indicates that women to him are commodities which come one after another at regular interval. The Duke invites the envoy to "look at her" with an amount of optical

visibility. In the gendered society “such controlling male gaze” always tries to visualize the “woman as mere image” (Mulvey 27). Browning presents the male view of women’s gender role here through the derogatory phrase “that piece” in the Duke’s mouth which only indicates the vulgar objectification of women in our society. The whole text is operated through many types of visualization particularly male visualization. The operation of eyes is presented through many words like “read” which actually stands here for “view”. The phrase “earnest glance” reflects the softness of a woman’s eyes, but the male visualization of the Duke’s eyes hints here the moral laxity of the woman. The “curtain” which he draws only for the envoy, clearly shows that it is a visual show for which eyes are very much necessary. The Duchess is an inanimate object not only for the Duke but also for the painter Fra Pandlof whose creative hand has made the “glance” and her “pictured countenance” living. But consequently the phrase “My favour at her breast” is a clear indication of seeing his wife or the women in this male dominated space as only an object for male gratification. In this context Laura Mulvey’s argument in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” can be mentioned. She argues here that “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance is split between the active male and the passive female; the male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure, while in their traditional exhibitionist role women are both displayed and, as it were, coded to connote ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’”(Waugh 510). The women, thus in the male visualization are either an object to quench the sexual thirst of men or a lifeless puppet which can be moved according to their directions.

In the sadistic patriarchal society there is no right for women to look everywhere and anywhere. Only men have the right to look at anything they choose and thus they can suppress the females through their right to “gaze”. The critic Lisa Harper in an article on the American poet Emily Dickinson has argued that “the desiring gaze is constructed as the gaze of male subject at a female object, so that little room is left for the active gaze of a desiring woman and no place for her desire” (Waugh 513). Thus through ages the male have used the “gaze” as the main weapon to subordinate women in every sphere of the society. The “men tend to be located higher than women” through such a power of gaze in this gendered politics of patriarchal society. According to the Duke, his wife does not follow the restrictive parameters that are defined for a woman’s behavior and identity:

... She had

A heart- how shall I say? - too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

The Duke's possessive and misogynistic male nature is seen when he says:

...She thanked men, - good; but thanked
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked
My gift of nine- hundred- years- old name
With anybody's gift.

The Duke here defines his wife's identity through what this aristocratic marriage has given to her. Implying that her identity was meaningless before the marriage, he points out that the marriage to him has given her an identity, "...nine- hundred- years- old name". This definition of her identity by assignation with his name is another example of restrictive imposition of male superiority upon women in general. The Duke's cursory look to his wife is an indication that she is not at all aware of her own class. She cannot differentiate between common men and her aristocratic husband and smiled at every man "the same smile". Theorists of gaze have made us aware of the ways in which we see a thing or a person. The way we see is not always what is there, but is sometimes what we expect or have been led to expect, hope or believe will be there. Likewise not understanding the innocence and good heartedness of his wife, with a derisive tone the Duke has branded his wife as cheap, loose and ordinary as her heart "too soon made glad" or "too easily impressed" or as "she thanked men". Conforming to the idea of "seeing is believing" the Duke ultimately gives command for death sentence for the Duchess's not conforming to the patriarchal standard of purity for women.

Throughout history women's bodies have been seen by societies as objects of beauty. This has been done through many art forms including music, dance, literature, painting and sculpture. Women's bodies were, and still are in the most part, loved for their frailty and their sensuality; their bodies are the objects to be lusted for and are to be relished while looking at it. In this text also the "Duchess's cheek", her "mantle", that "Lady's wrist", her "throat" are the

main objects which are asked by the Duke to be noticed by the envoy. In the last portion of the poem, the duke's expression about the Count's daughter is similarly distasteful: "Though his fair daughter's self ... is my object" which suggests that women to him actually are only colorful commodities, nothing else. She is an object to acquire a fair amount of dowry. The word "fair" is attached to his would be wife's self which clearly indicates the "face value" is very much necessary for him as it is to be relished by his eyes. In the concluding lines also, Browning uses the word "notice" to hint at the women's subjugation implied in the famous work of art:

... Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea- horse, thought a rarity,

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Neptune is here "taming a sea- horse" as the Duke of Ferrara has tamed and will tame his duchesses in sequence.

Michel Foucault in 1977 added a chapter on gaze, dealing with the idea of "Panopticism" in his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. The term means "all seeing" is taken from the writings of Jeremy Bentham who used the term "Panopticon" in a proposal published in 1791 for a prison in which all of the prisoners had individual cells in a ring- like building, and thus could be observed from a tower placed at the center of this building. All the prisoners were subject to gaze which they should know but the gaze they could not return. This constant possibility is always present in their mind and "the absolute surveillance leads to absolute discipline" (Waugh 511). Foucault summarizes the situation, "in short... the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers."(Foucault 201). So Foucault's "gaze" unambiguously means an absolute control. "Like those in charge of modern surveillance systems, the owner of the gaze is, for Bentham and Foucault, he who decides and he who controls. Similarly in the patriarchal system the dark male gaze tries to measure the bright eyes of women. Berger once observes that in European art from the Renaissance onwards women are depicted as being "aware of being seen by [male] spectator" (Berger 47) and this awareness is more tortuous than any physical torment inflicted on them. Eye contact and visual exchange which have tremendous importance in social human communication is negated to women because "the exchange of looks between two individuals in an interactive,

two way process: in looking, and searching for information or contact, we reveal things about ourselves, including things what we may not wish to reveal or of which we are unaware” (Waugh 508). If this is done by any woman she becomes the victim of male fixation as done by the Duke and ultimately has given her the highest and the most violent form of punishment, death.

“The gaze” though does not denote a well defined theoretical and critical movement or school, in some ways it is used like a “discourse” through which the whole society revolves round. It encourages a particular way of thinking and this thinking maintains the unequal power relation between man and woman. The Duchess in Browning’s monologue becomes the victim of this unequal power struggle. From the very first line “painted on the wall” to the last line “Neptune ...Taming a sea-horse” the Duchess is presented only as a sight, nothing else. Her identity is shaped only through the male visualization, the suppressive, oppressive and repressive male gaze: “Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves as being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight” (Berger 47).

Works Cited

- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin, 1972. Print.
- Goffman, Erving. *Gender Advertisement*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. Print.
- Hawthorne, Jeremy. “Theories of the Gaze.” *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006, 508-518. Print.
- Michel, Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin, 1991. Print.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. London: Macmillan, 1983. Print.

**‘Elegant Economy’: A Study of Old Age and Economic Agency in Elizabeth Gaskell’s
*Cranford***

Deblina Hazra

Abstract: The prevalent discourses on old age in the Nineteenth Century considered it to be an age of disempowerment. People above the age of fifty were considered to be old and were seen as a constant threat to the socio-economic stability. The old people were characterized with two predominant features – first, an inability to work and earn one’s own living; and second, a financial dependency on others for survival. Having been characterized, thus, as helpless and inactive, these aged persons were looked down upon as unwanted burdens on society whose survival depended on the mercy of others. This paper examines the popular ideas about the economic disempowerment of old age in Victorian England and reads Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* as offering an alternative reality to them. Studying the inter-relation between economy and the old ladies of Cranford this paper elucidates how Gaskell’s Amazons are not only financially independent but also active participants in the overall economic growth of the country. In providing the aged female characters with economic agency and an ability to work, thereby aiding the larger economic progress, Gaskell’s novel can be located as a counter-discourse which subverts the dominant notions of old age and represents the old ladies as self-dependent and active.

Keywords: Women, old age, economy, self-dependency, agency.

Defining 'old age' is a problem since, as much as gender, old age is also a cultural construct the boundaries of which keeps shifting with changing demographics and changing time. Though a socially constructed phenomenon age, however, is determined biologically. Normally people above retirement age are considered old. Having lost their physique to work, old people are generally positioned in the fringes of society, the centre being reserved for those with the capacity to work. Still far away from the enforcement of old-age pensions, the old citizens of Victorian England were often reduced to poverty and relegated to almshouses and workhouses. Women, who were already marginalized in a patriarchal society, faced a double marginalization in the old age. In the nineteenth century, post-menopausal women, that is, women above the age of fifty, were considered to be 'old'. They were seen as a source of misery to themselves and, if single, a burden to others. This paper reads Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* as subverting the prevalent discourse in the nineteenth century which saw old age as one of financial dependency and inability to work. In their incapacity to work, the old people were seen as burdens for they could not contribute to the economy. However, Gaskell's portrayal of the female characters of *Cranford* shows them to be not only self-dependent but also, in their own way, contributing to the country's holistic economic growth. A woman's value has historically been determined by her ability to produce children, her beauty, sexuality and worth. Since all these are in direct correlation to her fertility and, therefore, youth, the loss of youth in western culture often amounts to loss of identity. Lisa Niles summarizes the position of 'old' or post-menopausal women in the mid-nineteenth century: "The conventional view of menopause in the 1850s was one of disempowerment" (Niles 295). The 1851 census saw an increase in the number of redundant women. Added to that was the advancement in medical sciences which increased the average age of human beings. The spinsters, especially the old ones, were considered to be a constant threat to the equilibrium to the society. Though the spinsters of Victorian England were endowed with the unique legal right of possessing their own properties, a luxury unaffordable by the married woman till the enforcement of the Married Women's Property Act, they were looked upon as harbingers of disruption of economy. Having reached an age when they could neither contribute to the economy either by being productive or by being good consumers, these old women were scorned for affecting the financial growth of the nation. Women above fifty were considered, in the words of novelist Hilary Mantel, 'the invisible generation'. Just as the conduct books prescribed invisibility to the spinsters, the old women with their aged, celibate bodies were

advised to be invisible to the public eye. Teresa Mangum in her essay 'Little Women: The Aging Female Character in Nineteenth Century British Children's Literature' discusses the representation of older women in Victorian children's literature and conduct literature, focusing on the link established between children and older women. It was this link that, Mangum argues, constructed the destructive view of old age as second childhood, and thus, one of dependency. The fear of the old people throwing off the social equilibrium stems from this theory of dependency. The prime feature, thus, ascribed to the aged figures is one of reliance on others for survival. Mangum also points out the destructive association between ageism and racism which led to the consideration of older women as deserving deportation along with criminals and other unworthy figures. Mangum citing an 1866 article in the *Argosy*, 'The Art of Growing Old,' that bemoans the loss of "respect, veneration, and admiration" for the aged woman, notes how the women were culturally positioned as "an other and an outcast" (Mangum 85). The cultural as well as social discourses of the time stereotyped old women as helpless and inactive. Standing against such negative figurations of old age, Gaskell in *Cranford* ventures out to celebrate old age and gives her post-menopausal female spinsters both financial self-dependency and the ability to add to the country's economic growth. She portrays her female characters in opposition to the appendages traditionally attributed to old people. Her aged characters are active, visible to the public eye, self-dependent and contribute to the larger economy of the country. As against destroying the balance of the society, they help in the economic progress of the nation in their own ways.

The opening line of *Cranford* has drawn much attention in its critical reception. "In the first place, Cranford is in possession of the Amazons" (Gaskell 39). The word 'possession' has both an economic and a social connotation. The Amazons of Cranford are single women, possessing an economic power unique to their status as spinsters which provide them with the legal right of owning properties. Apart from an economic power, these ladies also have a social power. The entire town of Cranford is in their possession. If single women in Victorian England were socially marginalized, we see a reverse picture in this all-female community, where the spinsters are not merely visible but take 'possession' of the entire town in the absence of male characters. The female community in this town is self-dependent. In spite of being over fifty years of age, none of these women rely on others for survival. Readers are made aware of the age of these unmarried ladies and childless widows early in the novel when Martha, the maid of Miss

Matty chastises her for wearing a 'thin shawl' in cold weather and awakens her to the social reality of her age: "Eh! Dear ma'am, to think of your going out in an evening in such a thin shawl! It's no better than muslin. At your age, ma'am, you should be careful" (Gaskell 77). Resentful that her maid was talking about her age Miss Matty asks her crossly if she was aware of her mistress's age. Martha casually replies "not far short of sixty", to which her further enraged mistress corrects her with "grave emphasis" that she is "not yet fifty-two" (Gaskell 77). The "emphatic distinction" of "not far short of sixty" and "not yet fifty-two", as Niles points out, is "hardly worth the trouble that Miss Matty takes" (Niles 294), for fifty-two was still considered old according to the age-slabs of nineteenth century. However, Miss Matty's curt correction of Martha's assumption, shows how old-age is a social construct and her reluctance to abide by the slab and consider herself old. Therefore, pretty early in the novel, Gaskell through one of her Amazons challenges the tradition of setting up a boundary of age beyond which women were considered to have stepped in the restricted category of 'old'. Miss Matty by emphasizing her age affirms her refusal to be categorized into the socially constructed water-tight compartments of age. Her refusal also provides her with a kind of agency which was denied to the aged. Along with possessing an economic and social power, she also exhibits a power over her own self and sexuality, something poignantly uncommon among the nineteenth century women who were schooled to confine themselves within the patriarchal set up.

The pastoral space of Cranford, Helen Kuryllo points out, with its community of "women-without-men" (Kuryllo 103) and set apart from the industrial centre of Drumble, refuses to be located within the acceptable social order of nineteenth century England. She writes:

"The gentle spinsters of Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford are perhaps the most unlikely inhabitants of a place called 'the wild zone.' But this novel, with its challenge to nineteenth-century convention and its description of an alternative community - one of old women who lead pleasant, full lives without men -- calls for a redefinition of terms." (Kuryllo 102)

Gaskell through her aged unmarried female characters challenges the idea that "marriage and motherhood are the only appropriate spheres for women, and more importantly, spinsters and widows should take up residence in the home of the nearest male relative" (Kuryllo 103). The social structure of Victorian England looked upon the aged people with disgust for their inability to earn a living and as a result disrupt the economic equilibrium of the society through their financial dependency. However, the Malthusian economic model, which states that fast

multiplication of human race will result in miserable death out of poverty and contagious diseases, posits the old spinsters and childless widows as a boon to economic stability. T. R. Malthus in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* points out that childbearing can become a dangerous threat to economic stability on both individual and communal level since reproduction will always out space production in England's industrial economy. Lisa Niles in her essay 'Malthusian Menopause: Aging and Sexuality in Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford' argues that the old maids of Cranford hold "a unique set of virtues: the inability to reproduce coupled with economic self-dependence" (Niles 295). The ladies of Cranford on account of being single have the legal right to own their properties which make them economically self-dependent. They do not stand at the mercy of others for survival. In addition to that, having reached the menopausal stage, they are beyond the potential to multiply, hence, posing no threat to extinguish their economic resources and participate in the widespread misery produced by overpopulation. The widows are childless which make them incomplete as women according to the nineteenth century social and cultural parameters. However, in not having children, they indirectly help to check the imminent economic crisis foretold by Malthus.

The aged ladies of Cranford create their own "elegant economy" (Gaskell 42) and prove themselves to be capable enough not to upset the balance of that economy. In the very opening chapter narrator Mary Smith introduces the readers to this Cranfordian concept of 'elegant economy': "There, economy was always 'elegant,' and money-spending always 'vulgar and ostentatious'" (Gaskell 42). Well aware of their limited means, the Cranford ladies live life within the restricted boundaries of that means without engaging in any kind of extravagance. In other words, though not very affluent, these old spinsters and widows manage to survive decently with whatever little annual income they have in their name without becoming a burden on any young male relative. They, therefore, cannot be situated within the category of financially dependent old ladies. They take pride in their economic independence, however meagre that might be, and refuses to tarnish that independence with the appendage of 'poor'. Thus, when amidst their regular tea party, Mrs Forrester's maid disturbs "the ladies on the sofa by a request that she might get the tea-tray out from underneath" everyone receives this request "as the most natural thing in the world" (Gaskell 41). Unable to allow themselves the luxuries of an affluent lifestyle, the aged women economize on various things. They take the pain to stitch papers together to make paths inside the room for visitors to walk on, so that the only carpet does not

get soiled by their shoes. Miss Matty also economizes on candles, deferring their usage as long as possible. But the prime economization of the ladies is on their dresses, both when in Cranford and when away from it:

“Their dress is very independent of fashion; as they observe, ‘What does it signify how we dress here at Cranford, where everybody knows us?’ And if they go from home, their reason is equally cogent: ‘What does it signify how we dress here, where nobody knows us?’”
(Gaskell 40)

Mary Smith notes that “[T]he expenditure on dress in Cranford was principally” in caps (Gaskell 120). Though not generally concerned about their dresses and, hence, bringing down textile consumption to the minimal, the influence of one old Lady Glenmire leads to the awakening of the potential consumer latent inside the Cranford ladies. The presence of Lady Glenmire stimulates three of the Amazons of Cranford, Miss Matty, Miss Pole and Mrs Forrester, to buy patterns. The ladies, who never gave a second thought about dresses, get involved in profound contemplation over the most suitable pattern for presenting themselves before the newly arrived Lady in Cranford. In serving to promote consumption, Lady Glenmire is situated as a catalyst to economic growth. Through her, Gaskell emphasizes the monetary influence that old women can yield. Though she herself refrains from participating in the consumption process, she influences the rate of consumption of the other ladies, thus, indirectly adding to economic progress.

While one old lady manages to bring about a hike in material consumption among the ladies, thereby adding to the overall economic growth, another old lady directly participates in the process of that growth. Miss Matty, finding herself trapped in a financial crunch after the collapse of the Town and County Bank, decides to manipulate the situation to contribute to the larger economy of the country. Gaskell involves her aged female protagonist in the predominantly male profession of business to prove that far from being a hindrance to the capacity to work, old age can aid in fruitfully carrying out a work which feminine youth would never have dared to dream of. Miss Matty sets up a tea business in her home to earn a livelihood for herself. Buying tea from the East India Tea Company, she sells them to the local inhabitants of the town from her little parlour-turned-shop window. The East India Company by the middle of eighteenth century had started to expand its business beyond the boundaries of the empires into the far East. They bought products from the eastern countries and sold them in the British Isles. Miss Matty, in taking up the license of East India Tea Company as an agent and selling tea

among the inhabitants of Cranford, helps the Company in profit-making, thereby, in turn helping the larger economy of England to flourish. Engaging in active business at an age when women were advised confinement to the corners of the house, she subverts two Victorian ideologies: first, she retains her economic independence at old age even after having lost most of her annual income, and at the same time contributes to the economy of the country at large, thereby asserting her self-dependency and capacity to work; second, she comes out into the public making herself visible through her business, thus, challenging the ‘invisibility’ prescribed to both spinsters and old women. Cranford accepts old age and eccentricity as norm and the social structure of the town responds to the needs of those within it. Liberated from the rigid constraints of patriarchal families, the old women here discover that they can “live joyfully without children or husbands”, and that “friends are a better source of security than families, and old age need have no fear of loneliness” (Lansbury 9).

According to the Malthusian model the singleness and childlessness of the post-menopausal ladies of Cranford is favourable in thwarting the population explosion, thereby aiding economic stability. Moreover, when financial crisis threatens the economic stability on the level of an individual, they manage to control the instability on their own without any external help. When Miss Matty loses her savings and her annual income falls from “one hundred and forty-nine pounds thirteen shillings and four pence” (Gaskell 179) to only thirteen pounds after the collapse of the Town and County Bank, where her sister Deborah had made all investments, the other women of the town assemble together and decide in uniformity to provide financial help to her from their own annual income. Miss Pole, the proactive lady of the community calls upon Mary Smith, the narrator, and other women of the town to her house and decide to deduct the superfluous from their income and give the extra amount confidentially to Miss Matty:

“Miss Smith...I have conversed in private...with these ladies on the misfortune which has happened to our friend, –and one and all of us have agreed that, while we have a superfluity, it is not only a duty but a pleasure...to give what we can to assist her” (Gaskell 191).

The social fear that old women depend on the male members of their family for their financial need is debunked by Gaskell in this very significant episode of her novel. Her aged female characters by virtue of their agency and conscience come forward to help their friend in time of distress. A female camaraderie enables Miss Matty to overcome the financial crisis without the support of any kind of male intervention. Lisa Niles rightly points out that “*Cranford* takes the

category of ‘old maid’ as a viable alternative to the economic problems of reproduction and population” (Niles 296). *Cranford*, therefore, subverts the discourse which equated old age with childhood showing that even the aged have the capacity to face and overcome catastrophic situations in life without reclining on the young for support.

Gaskell had always been known for her compassionate nature and humanitarian approach. Her treatment of old age in *Cranford* opens up an alternate social reality in front of the readers. She portrays a society which was still not infected with the self-centered professional economy of Drumble. The economic structure of Cranford retains an innocent humanitarian aspect which was fast disappearing from the rapidly industrialized centres. Cranford is a place where the aged ladies readily offer financial help to a friend in need; Mr. Johnson, in spite of knowing that Miss Matty is his competitor, sends away his own customers to her telling them that “the tea he kept were of a common kind, but that Miss Jenkyns had all the choice sorts” (Gaskell 201); and, Miss Matty, on another occasion, though aware that the Town and County Bank has collapsed, exchanges a five pound note (from the same bank) of a poor man with five sovereigns so as to allow him to buy shawl for his wife and other goods for his family. Her exchanging of the five sovereigns for an unusable note meant an indefinite postponing of her purchase of silk for a gown that she was eagerly looking forward too. Her act signifies two things: first, it reflects the compassion and fellow feeling nurtured by the Amazons of Cranford which challenge the selfish, vicious economy that has engulfed the inhabitants of the industrial locations; second, and more importantly, by describing such as incident Gaskell points towards the role reversal of both age and gender. Here an old woman helps a young man financially, even if that meant a sacrifice on her part. Gaskell, therefore, invests her aged female characters not only with agency, autonomy, financial self-dependency and the ability to work but also with a divine compassion. These old women, in not being financially dependent on others, do not destabilize the economy; rather they participate directly or indirectly in the economic growth of the country. Such a treatment of the old ladies brings to question the universality and authenticity of the features attributed to the aged in the nineteenth century – financial dependency on others and inability to work. Gaskell’s powerful portrayal of an all-female and economically self-dependent community forces the readers to consider the possible existence of an alternate reality about old age and its negotiation with the economy in opposition to the destructive notions of dependency and inactivity commonly appended to it.

Works Cited:

- Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Cranford/Cousin Phillis*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004. Print.
- Kuryllo, Helen. "‘A Woman’s Text in the Wild Zone’: The Subversiveness of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*". *Utopian Studies*. 2 (1989): 102-108. *Penn State University Press*. n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20718911>
- Lansbury, Coral. *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Novel of Social Crisis*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Print.
- Malthus, T. R. *An Essay on the Principle of Population – 1803-1826*. Ed. Patricia James. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.
- Mangum, Teresa. "Little Women: The Aging Female Character in Nineteenth-Century British Children’s Literature." *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*. Ed. Kathleen Woodward. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999. pp. 59-87. Print.
- Niles, Lisa. "Malthusian Menopause: Aging and Sexuality in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*". *Victorian Literature and Culture*. 33.1 (2005): 293-310. *Jstor*. n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058708>

Finding the “Divinely Human”: Humanitarian Intimacy and the Crisis of Faith in George Eliot’s *Silas Marner*

Shramana Das Purkayastha

Abstract: Due to the scientific discoveries of the era, consolation of a divine communion became increasingly inaccessible to the Victorian mind. The new knowledge of our universe, introduced by the evolutionary and geological sciences, radically belied the tenets of Christianity.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that this led the Victorians to passively accept atheism as their inescapable lot. Intellectual milieu of the nineteenth century Europe was marked by profound philosophical debates and a continuous quest for some larger transcendental truth, access to which institutionalised religion had been proven unable to provide. In England, Cardinal Newman’s Oxford Movement insisted on a revitalisation of Christian faith through a thorough transformation of the Anglican Church’s lack of theological rigour. At the same time, the era witnessed the momentous emergence of the humanist religion of Positivism.

Keenly alive as she was to such contemporary concerns, George Eliot herself underwent a period of profound philosophical upheaval. Shunning her initial conviction in orthodox Christian Evangelicalism, she moved, as Brian Spittles observes, “in the mainstream of Victorian philosophic agnosticism and *towards a form of humanism* that became increasingly the sanctuary of people unable to live within Christian theology, but unable to live without some moral and ethical guidance” (emphasis mine).

The practice of cultivating bonds of sympathetic intimacy with the larger humanity, therefore, came to be perceived as a convenient and certainly more reliable alternative to religion, whose consolations now seemed treacherously tenuous. In the present paper I would focus chiefly on George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* to illustrate how in this novel the author delineates her new found faith in the religion of humanity. Her protagonist, a simple weaver, moves from a naïve belief, through rougher days of atheism and acute misanthropy, towards happier times of inner peace. Silas finds his grace not through theological meditations, neither through miraculous divine intimations; but only when he opens up his solitary heart to acknowledge a feeling of intimacy towards fellow human-beings. Deeply influenced by her own reading (and translations) of Strauss’ *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* and Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*, George Eliot strove to ground her faith in human communion. Keeping herself detached from both the prevalent spirit of atheism as well the over-enthusiasm of the Dissenters, she perceived “the necessity of recasting

the currency of our religion..., that it may carry fresh and bright the stamp of the age's highest and best idea...”.

Key-words: Decline of faith, humanist religion, Ludwig Feuerbach, August Comte, George Eliot, atheism, human sympathy

In early twentieth century, while commenting on the technological advances of the preceding era, mathematician and philosopher A. N. Whitehead observed that “the greatest invention of the nineteenth century was the invention of the method of invention”. (Whitehead: 1932, 120) This self-congratulatory ethos was, however, accompanied by the bitter knowledge that this advancement of learning rendered simple religious faith problematic. Although Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species* (1859) has come to be blamed for striking the first death knoll to Christian faith, it is much before mid-nineteenth century that a voice contrary to Biblical teaching could be discerned. Charles Lyell’s seminal work *Principles of Geology*, brought out between 1830 and 1833, proved that a steadfast belief in the literal truth of the *Bible* may be misleading. The idea of the formation of earth’s crust by a series of gradual geological changes, that Lyell postulated in his work, presupposed for the earth a vastly greater age than was allowed for in the accepted Biblical chronology. Lyell’s work dismissed theological concepts like the Seven Days’ Creation, Adam and Eve and the Flood. Significantly, Darwin himself, in his Introduction to the third edition of *The Origin*, admits that the ideas developed in his book began to take shape while he was voyaging on board H. M. S. *Beagle*. He was on the *Beagle* from 1831 to 1836, indicating how early he began to conceive his scientific thesis. Moreover, the publication of Darwin’s book was prompted by the knowledge that another scientist, A. R. Wallace, has been working for some time in the same direction and may soon publish his own work. From the early decades of the century, Victorian intellectual milieu thus witnessed the steady growth of a knowledge system whose tenets seem to falsify the very basis of religious faith. Besides, industrial development, with its factory method of production and the consequent hunt for coal and other mineral ores, gave rise to a general public interest in the geological sciences. This particular branch of science, contrary though it was to Biblical teachings, had, as historian Asa Briggs writes, “...a special appeal for the middle classes who found in geology in particular a science which could account for their wealth--- thick coal seams--- and could enliven their leisure hours through the favourite Victorian pursuit of collecting fossils and shells.” (Briggs: 1979, 480)

Due to such a spurt of scientific discoveries in the era, consolation of divine communion became increasingly inaccessible to the Victorian mind. Keenly alive as she was to such contemporary concerns, George Eliot herself underwent a period of profound philosophical upheaval. Growth of science deeply interested her. In 1856, she assisted in the conception of Lewes's work on natural sciences. In the same year, she wrote a review on Bohlen's *Introduction to the Book of Genesis*, focussing on the points of compatibility and conflict between the Biblical version of Creation and that offered by evolutionary theories. Eliot's personal history seems to reflect the philosophical crisis of her age. Her rational mind could no longer adhere to a faith in the Christian God. Yet, her sensibilities always sought access to some "spiritual values, a transcendental aspiration through which the individual could feel contact with larger, and perhaps materially nebulous, areas of experience." (Spittles: 1993, 81) In the present paper, I propose to discuss how Eliot's *Silas Marner* enacts in its simple, fairy-tale-like narrative structure, the full complexity of a difficult trajectory from godlessness to grace attained through humanitarian intimacy. During the production of the novel, Eliot, in a letter to the publisher, expressed her conviction in "the remedial influence of pure, natural human relations" (Bloom: 2007, 3), and her "moral fable", as F. R. Leavis describes the novel, brings out the full significance of her faith in human intimacy.

Decline of faith notwithstanding, the Victorians, however, did not accept an attitude of spiritual nihilism as their inescapable lot. Intellectual life of the nineteenth century Europe was marked by a continuous quest for some alternative means of regaining a sense of divine intimation. Whereas science had challenged the veracity of the *literal* reading of the *Bible*, attempts had been made all over Germany to read the holy text metaphorically and humanistically.

England in its turn witnessed the burgeoning of two important theological drifts, representing two ideological extremes, but both responding in contrasted ways to the current crisis of faith. While on one hand Cardinal Newman's Oxford Movement (inaugurated significantly in 1833, the year of publication of the final volume of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*) insisted on a revitalisation of Christian faith through a thorough transformation of the Anglican Church's lack of theological rigour, in the provinces, on the other hand, Non-conformity or Dissent gained popularity among the working classes. The latter terms refer to

those Protestants who disavow fidelity to both the Church of England and that of Rome. The 1851 religious census indicates the sect's growing strength in the provincial cities. (Briggs: 1975, 68-69) Non-conformity included a plethora of sub-groups, all of them evincing distinct ideological and regional specificities. There were Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Quakers, Moravians, Plymouth Brethren, Unitarians, to name but a few. Valentine Cunningham notes that "According to lists in *Whitaker's Almanac*, 101 different names of places of worship were lodged with the Registrar-General in 1869; in 1890 there were 244." (Cunningham: 1977, 25) Such a remarkable proliferation of religious groups evidences an urgency to find a means of divine communion, the solace of which now seems irrevocably lost.

However, the moral structure of *Silas Marner* represents Eliot's scepticism regarding Non-conformity's exaggerated reliance on personal revelation. Without mentioning any specific name, the author makes Silas the member of a Dissenting sect, popular among the simple-minded rural folks: "... a narrow religious sect, where the poorest layman has the chance of distinguishing himself by gifts of speech...". (14) While appreciating its essentially democratic character, Eliot could criticise the sect with a clear-eyed perception. Non-conformity claimed that unflinching faith can produce miraculous revelations and provide access to divinity. In order to gain such a sense of divine intimacy, one must be ever cautious not to let reason adulterate his faith. Eliot, however, rightly discerns the danger inherent in that form of religiosity. Any blind adherence to faith, when coupled with a willed repression of rationality, may easily degenerate into superstition. Silas too shows such an attitude. Convinced as he is of the divine significance of his cataleptic fit, the thought of getting the disease medically treated is deemed blasphemous by him and his co-brethren. (15) His catalepsy is interpreted as a mode of divine visitation, and therefore curing it means a denial of admittance to God himself. No wonder that in such a mental makeup, chance happenings will be confused with divine interference. The villagers of Lantern Yard resort to "drawing of lots", instead of legal inquiry, to identify the criminal. When after being falsely accused of burglary, Silas hopes: "God will clear me" (18), he unwittingly invests his faith in luck, and not actually on divine benevolence. Luck does not favour him: the drawing of lots pronounces him guilty, and with it Silas's "trusting simplicity" (16) suffers a severe jolt. Not knowing how to distinguish between religion and superstition, his simple heart interprets mischance as the proof of a veritable absence of God: "...there is no just God that governs the earth righteously, but a God of lies, that bears witness against the innocent." (20)

Eliot suggests that there is no easy shortcut to divine communion. Turning a deaf ear to the call of reason can never guarantee permanence of faith. Rather, lacking firm grounding, such a faith crumbles at the faintest sign of contrariety. Victorians, therefore, faced with such a critical problem, needed to redefine conventional idea of religion. Divinity is to be found, not in the intimacy of private worship, but through forging multiple bonds of sympathy and love with humanity at large. By reaching out to the “other”, the self can hope to reclaim an intimate connection with God. George Eliot thus always sought to harmonise reason and feeling, science and religion. Passive resignation to a mood of spiritual nihilism repelled her. In her review of James Froude’s deeply pessimistic novel *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849), Eliot insists on “the necessity of recasting” the current idea of religion, so that her contemporary times may produce the “highest and best ideas”, without being trapped either in the narrowness of Non-conformity, or the over-zealous orthodoxy of dogmatic religion. (Spittles: 1993, 71-72) At the time when she was writing *Silas Marner*, Eliot’s letter to her friend Barbara Bodichon expressed a felt need to find an alternative means of divine communion, a means which would not require willing suspension of disbelief:

I have faith in the working-out of higher possibilities than the Catholic or any other church has presented, and those who have strength to wait and endure, are bound to accept no formula which their whole souls--- their intellect as well as their emotions--- do not embrace with entire reverence. The ‘highest calling and election’ is to do *without opium* and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance. (Spittles: 1993, 81)

It is ultimately in the humanitarian creed of Positivism that she finds such a path to divinity. Deeply influenced by her own reading (and translations) of Strauss’ *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (published in 1846) and Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* (published in 1854), George Eliot strove to ground her faith in human communion. While consolation of institutionalised religion seemed feeble, religion of human love seemed to offer an alternative that reconciles the contrary claims of reason and faith. Grace and the solace of immortality are to be found, not through a reliance on Christian God, but through being remembered for acts of charity done towards the “Divinely human”, as Eliot writes in her 1867 poem ‘O May I Join the Choir Invisible’:

“Of those immortal dead who live again

In minds made better by their presence: live

In pulses stirred to generosity.” (Qtd. Spittles: 1993, 28)

In this the French philosopher August Comte’s creed of Positivism, flourishing in 1830s, became a major source of inspiration for her. Positivism traced the etymology of the word ‘religion’ to ‘religare’ or ‘connect’. It preached a religion, based, not on private religious practices like church-going or attending sermons, but on altruistic service done towards humanity at large. Though never a Positivist herself, she extensively read Comte’s works and admitted that: “My gratitude increases continually for the illumination Comte has contributed to my life” (Spittles: 1993, 29). Frederick Harrison, the chief proponent of Positivism in Eliot’s contemporary England, affirmed that: “...With the cardinal ideas of Positivism--- the cherishing and extension of all true religious sentiment...towards the well-being of mankind--- not only was George Eliot in profound sympathy, but no one else in our time has expressed those ideas with such power.” (Spittles: 1993, 82-83)

Truly Eliot’s oeuvre seems to vindicate Harrison’s comment. Crisis of faith in all her novels is resolved through the protagonist’s embracement of a life of charity. *Adam Bede* celebrates the “secret of deep human sympathy”, Dorothea in *Middlemarch* finds solace only when she opens herself up to “the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance”, and *Romola* has been described by Terence Wright as a “Positivist allegory” (Wright: 1986, 189). In *Silas Marner* too, Silas is saved from his self-destructive cynicism only when he directs his love to Eppie. Here Eliot’s protagonist, a simple weaver, moves from a naïve belief, through rougher days of atheism and acute misanthropy, towards happier times of inner peace. Silas finds his grace not through theological meditations, neither through miraculous divine intimations; but only when he opens up his solitary heart to acknowledge a feeling of intimacy towards fellow human-beings.

The initial phases of Silas’ life in Lantern Yard have been marked by an unwavering trust in God and mankind. Sharing a bond of close fellowship, he has put blind faith in the goodness of William Dane. Such a trust, however, is akin to spiritual naiveté whose pitfalls have already been discussed. Silas’ myopic eyes seem then to be a bodily manifestation of his moral short-

sightedness--- he fails to perceive both the irrationality of his religious belief and William's immorality, hidden beneath a veneer of righteousness. Suffering betrayal at the hand of his closest friend and interpreting misfortune as a sign divine malevolence, Silas loses all faith in God and humanity. His simple trusting soul reaches the nadir of pessimism. Resolving to forever shun human company, Silas Marner regresses into a self-imposed solitary confinement, working perpetually at his loom and never trying to be familiar with his new neighbours at Raveloe.

For Eliot such immersion into cynicism hinders the development of the best and noblest faculties of human mind. While his goodness--- the innate "sap of affection" (29)--- remains essentially intact, Silas wilfully lets the tenderness of his soul be eclipsed by a bitter suspicion of mankind. Eliot's recurrent use of insect imagery to describe the weaver's present life brings out the dreariness of this subhuman existence with an unmatched poignancy: "He seemed to weave, like a spider, from pure impulse, without reflection" (24), aroused only the by the instinctive sensation of hunger. His life is reduced "to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect". (24)

Stopping thus all access and passage to love, Silas becomes obsessed with the money earned through his weaving. Interestingly, his gestures towards the gold coins are all described in terms of human affection, as if his lonely soul, finding human love treacherous, seeks a substitute on which he may expend his pent up feelings: "...in the night, when his work was done,... he drew them out to enjoy their companionship. He loved the guineas best, ... he loved them all... as if they had been unborn children". (27-30).

A moral betterment can be brought about only through the protagonist's realisation of the "therapeutic and liberating value" (Ermarth, 28) of human intimacy. Following the Feuerbachian line of thought, George Eliot in almost all her works emphasises the sacred function of human communion. In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach stresses the importance of prayer as a mode of reaching out to the "other". In Feuerbach's concept, prayer is not directed to some distant God, but to each and every human being. It is a mode of acknowledging the distinctiveness of each individual. Through prayer the self learns to love the other, even while fully recognising its essential difference from the latter: "The other is my *thou*...". (Feuerbach: 1957, 158) Other-ness then is seen not as something intimidating, but as a proof of the exhilarating abundance of human resources. Humanity thus becomes the supreme good; intimacy with it is an experience spiritually more enriching than that offered by dogmatic belief-

systems. George Eliot echoes this Feuerbachian principle when she comments that: “the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of a goodness entirely human...”. (Qtd. Ermarth, 28)

Silas regains his share of grace only when he allows himself to acknowledge this divine significance of human relations. Losing his gold, he turns to his neighbours and receives abundant recompense at his hour of distress. Significantly, this time his relationship is not based on a naïve trust as before. Rather, his solitary heart slowly, tremblingly opens itself up to the kindness offered by villagers like Dolly Winthrop. (99-101) But his final recovery comes with Silas’ acceptance of Eppie, his paternal love for the baby girl replacing his futile passion for gold. And the “divinely human” does not betray him. During the process of rearing up the baby, Silas reaches out to his neighbours for assistance. No longer an isolated misanthrope, Silas lets himself become a part of the human community and even begins to depend on their goodwill (99). His bruised heart is healed through his affection for Eppie, who in turn loves her father with a fondness not to be shaken even by the temptation of social mobility. Given a choice between Godfrey Cass, her affluent natural father, and the poor weaver, her foster parent, Eppie prefers to live forever with Silas, knowing full well that had she chosen otherwise, her life would have been more prosperous. For her, however, it is not at all a difficult choice; there is no question of deserting her poor father whose love and affection has sustained her all throughout her life and who needs her now in his old age: “...he’s took care of me and loved me from the first, and I’ll cleave to him as long as he lives, and nobody shall ever come between him and me.” (206) No wonder then that Eppie’s arrival precipitates the gradual restoration of Silas’s lost faith in mankind and Divinity. He tells Dolly: “Nay, nay... you’re i’ the right, Mrs. Winthrop... There’s good i’ this world--- I’ve a feeling o’ that now; and it makes a man feel as there’s a good more nor he can see, i’ spite o’ the trouble and wickedness. That drawing o’ the lots is dark; but the child was sent to me: there’s dealings with us--- there’s dealings.” (175)

At this juncture we may note Eliot’s use of images of doors and thresholds to mark the various stages in Silas emotional trajectory. Ensnared in his misanthropy, Silas jealously guards his doorway. At Raveloe, he never allows admittance to anybody in his cottage: “...he invited no comer to step across his door-sill”. (12) When village urchins peep into his house, Silas glares at them from his threshold (10). Shunning even God, he chooses to live in a village whose thick

groves seem to shut out the intervening eyes of heaven (22). If closed doors thus represent a self-centred existence, Silas' change of heart is signalled through acts opening doors. The lock of his heart being broken, Silas realises that any help that may console him must come from *outside* (99). Therefore, "[h]e opened the door wide to admit Dolly...". (99) However, by no means does the author make the symbolism so easy to grasp. Open doors are certainly associated with the gradual opening up of Silas's heart, but they also bring about disasters. Just as Eppie crawls past Silas through his open door as an unexpected blessing, the thief who steals Silas's gold too enters the cottage through the unlocked door. In Lantern Yard, the open door at the dying deacon's house allows admittance to the treacherous William Dane, who, stealing the deacon's money and then falsely accusing Silas of the crime, sullies the latter's trust. This ambiguity surrounding the meaning of the symbol serves to problematize the nature of trust. While it is important to retain faith in humanity, a blind trust invested in an undeserving person may turn out to be dangerous. The symbol of unguarded doorway then "emblematises the risk and the opportunity of such openness, the need to control it..." and the need to realise that "while... trust creates vulnerability, it also binds [the] characters to life..."(Ermarth, 35-36) In the final analysis, George Eliot seems to suggest that intimacy with the human divinity generates a faith more ennobling than that preached by dogmatic religion, but by no means should any belief be allowed to mar our rational judgement.

Works Cited

- Bloom, Harold (Ed.). Introduction to *Viva Modern Critical Interpretations: George Eliot's 'Silas Marner'*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2007. 1-3. Print.
- Briggs, Asa. *Victorian Cities*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975. Print.
- *The Age of improvement 1783- 1867*. London: Longman, 1979. Print.
- Cunningham, Valentine. *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. Print.
- Eliot, George. *Silas Marner*. London: Penguin, 1994. Print.

Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. "George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy". *Viva Modern Critical Interpretations: George Eliot's 'Silas Marner'*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2007. 27- 44. Print.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. Trans. George Eliot. Torchbook ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1957. Print.

Spittles, Brian. *George Eliot: Godless Woman*. London: MacMillan, 1993. Print.

Whitehead, A. N. *Science and the Modern World*. Cambridge: University Press, 1932. Print.

Wright, Terence R. *The Religion of Humanity*. Cambridge: University Press, 1986. Print.

The Moral Dilemma of Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*: A Critical Study

Jayanta Mukherjee

Abstract: In *Adam Bede* (1859) George Eliot's moral approach is primarily based on the consequences of the moral lapses in a character. In her next novel *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Eliot makes a little departure from her earlier stance on the issue of morality and introduces the concept of moral dilemma. This paper tries to explain the subtle difference between moral dilemma and moral conflict and thus makes an effort to clear some popular misconceptions regarding Maggie's inability to resolve the moral dilemma which she confronts in the final stage of the novel. In fact, a moral dilemma is a situation in which each of two things ought to be done but both cannot be done. In order to regard a moral conflict as a genuine dilemma, the conflicting obligations or moral requirements must at least be such that neither overrides the other. If one moral requirement does override another, we have resolvable conflict but not a dilemma. In the Sixth Book of the novel, *The Great Temptation*, the heroine, Maggie Tulliver is left to choose between two alternatives, either of which would cause suffering to the people who are very near and dear to her. Her decision becomes complicated as there are no preconceived principles to ascertain the correct choice. This chapter is crucial as it describes the central event of the novel i.e. Maggie's boating expeditions with Stephen Guest who is engaged to her cousin Lucy. Stephen is all along conscious of what he is doing, but by the time Maggie realizes her fault it has become too late to amend it. To get back to St.Ogg's that night is impossible and whatever decision Maggie makes on the following morning, she cannot avert the suffering that her yielding to Stephen's proposal has caused. She cannot go forward to get married with Stephen and have the enjoyment of selfish happiness; she cannot even go back and save Lucy and Philip from their misery. Thus, it seems that George Eliot has deliberately and intentionally placed Maggie in a genuine dilemma which can have no solutions. However, this paper also substantiates that the moral dilemma which Maggie suffers from, is just a part of her entire moral development and it culminates when she, braving the devastating flood, attempts to save Tom's (who earlier banished Maggie from home for her elopement with Stephen) life and both brother and sister die in each other's arms. Through this act of Maggie the novelist tries to convey one important message to society that 'morality' means something more than a dry and abstract code of conduct framed by the society. Maggie may be a social outcast but she truly, at the end of the novel, epitomizes the quintessence of human morality.

Key words: Moral conflict, Moral dilemma, Divided self, Moral growth

George Eliot's second novel, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), not only depicts the physical growth of the protagonist Maggie Tulliver from childhood to youth, but also her moral growth from innocence to experience and from ignorance to vision. Maggie from the beginning is entangled in triple conflicts --- the conflict within her own divided self, the clash with her brother's puritan morality, and lastly her collision with the provincial society and neighborhood. Her constant struggle to negotiate with her conflicting self and surrounding gives a moral dimension to her character.

Maggie from her early childhood suffers because she is dreamy and forgetful, thoughtless and impulsive, oversensitive and mentally immature, and her brother, whom she adores, does not have any of these qualities. He is rigid, unimaginative, with all the oversimplified moral doctrines of the Dodsons. He was particularly clear and positive on one point, namely that he would punish everybody who deserved it. According to Simon De Beauvoir, "Tom obstinately upholds accepted principles, congeals morality in formal rules, but Maggie tries to put the breath of life into them, she upsets them, she goes to the limit of her solitude and emerge as a genuine free being beyond the sclerosed universe of the males" (Beauvoir 383). The pattern is established in childhood. In the first episode Maggie, who has been living for the day of Tom's return from school, has to confess that his rabbits have undergone some severe misfortunes and they quarrel.

However, on this occasion, since childish quarrels end in reconciliation, she and Tom are soon friends again. But their characters are already measured: Maggie passionate, loving, but always doing the wrong thing; Tom, common place, self-righteous, trustworthy, never tempted to any excess at all. Maggie never thinks of the results of her actions before she acts. Driven to frenzy by her aunt's comments on her shaggy black hair, she rushes upstairs and cuts it off; taunted about her brown skin, and wildly jealous of her neat little blond cousin, she pushes Lucy into the mud; the outcry about that decides her to run off to the gypsies. And she is desperately lonely, because no one around her has the least interest in her love of reading, or can share in her longings to enlarge her life and develop the faculties she knows she possesses.

Help comes there when she meets Philip Wakem, the crippled boy who goes to school with Tom. But the seeds of tragic irony are innate in that friendship. However, it is fate that makes his father the lawyer against whom Mr. Tulliver hurls humiliation and makes his family swear an unending vengeance. After the bankruptcy of Mr. Tulliver, when the children leave school, Tom goes to work for his uncle Deane, and all his planning is for the future and paying off his father's debts. He gives no thought to Maggie who is left with her embittered parents, and with a soul untrained for inevitable struggles, to a life filled only with dull duties, vain day dreams and bursts of adolescent fury and despair. Pathetically she finds temporary serenity in the reading of *The Imitation of Christ* by St. Thomas á Kempis, and she disciplines herself in the gospel of renunciation and the suppression of self-love. That unnatural peace is broken by a chance meeting with Philip, whom Maggie has not seen for several years. She longs for the old

companionship, but feels that any meeting between them must be kept secret, and their closeness will act as a spiritual light. Philip argues against her negative asceticism and plays on her pity for his own crippled body and lonely life. She is plunged into many conflicts, not that between good and evil, but that between one good and another good. Philip wears down her scruples, arguing for the necessity of self-development, not self-mortification:

‘I shall have strength given me,’ said Maggie, tremulously.

‘No, you will not, Maggie; no one has strength given to do what is unnatural. It is mere cowardice to seek safety in negations. You will be thrown into the world someday, and then every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now will assault you like a savage appetite.’ (Eliot, *The Mill* 327)

It is inevitable that Philip should succeed in persuading Maggie to continue the harmless meetings, and it is obvious that he should fall in love with her. She is in fact, not sexually awakened, and it is only the warm affection and pity she has for him that make her promises to marry him if it should ever be possible.

The secret is eventually revealed. Ironically again the blow comes from an unlikely quarter. It is the amiable and well-meaning Aunt Pullett who remarks at the Sunday dinner table that she has noticed Philip coming from the Red Deeps. Instantly Tom’s suspicions are roused; he surprises Maggie who was on the point of going to see Philip. Tom gives two alternatives to Maggie either she swears never to meet Philip again, or Tom would personally convey this event to their father. Tom thus says, “I will tell my father everything; and this month, when by my exertions he might be made happy once more, you will cause him the blow of knowing that you a disobedient, deceitful daughter, who throws away her own respectability by clandestine meetings with the son of a man that has helped to ruin her father” (Eliot, *The Mill* 328). Tom insults Philip and taunts him with his deformity. Maggie says she must inform her father first, but when Philip has left, she turns on Tom as she has never done before. Tom, however, forges ahead in the Dodson world. Having a lack of imaginative understandings, Tom appreciates the practical virtues and does not recognize her emotional limitations. Maggie says to him: “You have been reproaching other people all your life. If you were in fault, I should be sorry for the pain it brought you. But you have always enjoyed punishing me. You have no pity. You are nothing but a Pharisee. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues” (Eliot, *The Mill* 340).

The critics have hardly any quarrel with the novel up to this point. Action, environment and character have been interfused to produce a sense of rich texture and the inevitable course of development. But ever since the publication of the novel in 1860, the last two books in it have been attacked partly on the score of the melodramatic ending, but more on the count that Stephen Guest is not the sort of man Maggie could ever have fallen in love with and that it degrades her to do so. Meeting this criticism, George Eliot owned that she planned her material badly. She enjoyed writing the earlier part so much that she had left no room to develop the tragic catastrophe as she wished. But she denied violently that her psychology was at fault in making Maggie fall in love with Stephen: “If I am wrong there if I really did not know what my heroine would do under the circumstances in which I deliberately placed her I ought not to have written

the book at all.” (qtd. in Haight xiii). She goes on to say that Maggie is a character “essentially noble, but liable to a great error” (qtd. in Haight xiii) and that she must represent her truthfully.

George Eliot is quite sound here in the point she is making the possibility of Maggie being overwhelmed by an attraction to a man who was engaged with her cousin Lucy as well. When Philip tells Maggie that the repression of her natural instincts would mean they would later assault her “like a savage appetite” (Eliot, *The Mill* 329), the reader anticipates that Maggie’s next conflict would involve sex as well as moral sensibility. But George Eliot puts into question Maggie’s taste, culture and upbringing in enabling Stephen to steal Maggie’s attention. Though Stephen’s character is not developed well, it is hard to believe that a woman of Maggie’s nature could get attracted towards Stephen who in the opening of the Sixth Book, is represented as “this young man whose diamond ring, *atar* of roses, and an air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o’clock in the day, are the graceful and odoriferous result of the largest oil mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg’s” (Eliot, *The Mill* 363). The reader winces at the picture of this bejeweled and perfumed young spark, and everything that follows is unfortunately tainted with that introductory image. This is a pity.

However, Maggie’s attraction to Stephen has psychological reality. Since her father’s death, she has been teaching in a school, with no outlet for adult relationships. After the first evening with the emotional stimulus of the music and the obvious attentions of this handsome young man, George Eliot describes Maggie as being excited in a way that was mysterious to herself:

It was not that she thought distinctly of Mr. Stephen Guest, or dwelt on the indications that he looked at her with admiration: it was rather that she felt the half remote presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven into her dreamy reveries. (Eliot, *The Mill* 385)

The meeting, too, comes before she again sees Philip. The development of the mounting sexual tension between Maggie and Stephen is convincing, with the inevitable issue that she gets caught in a situation from which no happy escape is possible. The conflict of loyalties is insoluble and it places Maggie in a genuine dilemma as there are no preconceived principles which could direct her choice and resolve her dilemma.

In fact, Maggie’s suffering emanates from her wrong choice. She makes a wrong choice when she decides to leave Stephen Guest and return to St. Ogg’s. She should have realized that she was guilty of a great moral wrong. Her nightlong boating expedition with Stephen would be treated as elopement by the society, and if she return unmarried, she would return would return in disgrace. Further, her elopement was a wrong both to Lucy and Philip, and one that cannot be amended by her giving up of Stephen. Her action has demonstrated that she loves neither Lucy nor Philip and that her rejection of Stephen is not going to set matters right. Death alone can solve her problems, and death by drowning brings together the brother and sister forever, and is a fitting end to life and suffering of the heroine. Her suffering is intense and poignant and at the moment of her death, she rises to heights tragic grandeur.

The final symbolism by which she drifts into an irrevocable situation through the drifting of the boat on the river is skillfully managed. There is irony again in the fact that the river expedition had been planned with Philip, and Maggie looks forward to it, “for perhaps it would bring her some strength and calmness to be one with Philip again.” But Philip is sick, and Stephen takes his place, and the lovers are carried by the tide and “the dreamy gliding of the boat” (Eliot, *The Mill* 464). When Maggie realizes their position, it is too late for any decision of hers to save pain to others. Her final resolution is that she cannot go forward to be married with Stephen. Her whole family gets involved in the scandal associated with her flight. Maggie’s attitude makes it difficult for the reader to sympathize with her fully. Moreover, Maggie’s words of refusal to marry Stephen are quite inconsistent with her deeds and make her argument unacceptable. While refusing Stephen, Maggie once says that “if past is not to bind us, where can duty lie” (Eliot, *The Mill* 415) has a deep moral significance but unfortunately Maggie fails to abide by this moral principle.

Maggie’s decision to leave Stephen and return to St. Ogg’s aggravates her problems. She is driven out of her home by her brother Tom Tulliver. Maggie suffers and suffers alone in the unsympathetic society. Her free spirit gets snared in a prosaic, ruthless and unfeeling society. Simon De Beauvoir rightly says “that Maggie dies because she stands alone and weak against the odds of the world. But the world is too strong to be opposed by her, eventually it perishes her” (Beauvoir, 387). As Maggie returns to St. Ogg’s and seeks advice from Dr. Kenn, George Eliot use the latter to express her own views, and this employment of a wise disinterested spectator to express her own views, and this employment of a wise disinterested spectator as commentator on the action is as it were a lens through which the reader may see the action in a new perspective. The pragmatic approach is akin to such a device as used by some late twentieth century novelists. But this method used in *The Mill on the Floss* remains on an initial stage only. Maggie, in her inexperience fumbles over the conception that the novelist wants to express through Dr. Kenn Maggie instead relies on her own conscience that her temperament, her upbringing and her environment have combined to develop in her certain strength to get rid of the moral problem.

Meanwhile, amidst her torments St. Ogg, she is communicated by both Philips Wakem and Stephen Guest. Both of them conveyed their deep love and commitment towards Maggie. Philips in his letter confessed: “the place where you are is the one where my mind must live. Maggie call me back to you! – call me backs to life and goodness” (Eliot, *The Mill* 504). This complicates Maggie’s choice and accentuates her moral dilemma. Here we remember the words of Terrance C. McConnell:

A moral dilemma is a situation in which each of two things ought to be done but both cannot be done. In order for a moral conflict to count as a genuine dilemma the conflicting obligation or moral requirements must at least be such that neither overrides other. If one moral requirement does override another, we have resolvable conflict but not a dilemma. (McConnell 36)

So it is immaterial whether Maggie lives or dies, her dilemma would remain unresolved. In this context, the criticisms of Walter Allen and Joan Bennet regarding the ending of *The Mill on the Floss* are a bit harsh and partial. Walter Allen writes,

If you have a river in a novel, a flood is always tempting: but by yielding to the temptation, George Eliot, instead of allowing Maggie to resolve the moral dilemma in which she found herself, and live by its consequences, took the easy way and substituted for a genuine resolution a cliché-ending from the stock of Victorian fiction. (Allen 227)

Joan Bennet comments: “George Eliot has cut the knot she was unable to unravel---she [George Eliot] has let her [Maggie] choose and then she has refused to imagine the results of her choice” (Bennet, 130). On the other hand, it may be argued that George Eliot has deliberately and intentionally placed Maggie in a dilemma which does not have any solution.

However, this moral dilemma which Maggie suffers from, is just a part of her entire moral development and it culminates when she braving the devastating flood attempts to save Tom’s life and both brother and sister dies in each other’s arms. Tom at last recognizes his sister’s worth “a new revelation to his spirit of the depth in life that lies beyond his vision which he has fancied so keen and clear” (Eliot, *The Mill* 360). Notwithstanding all the tortures meted to her by her brother Tom, Maggie in her final act of supreme sacrifice forgives her brother and tries to save his life. Through this act of Maggie the novelist tries to convey one important message to society that “morality” means something more than a dry and abstract code of conduct framed by the society. Maggie may be a social outcast but she truly, at the end of novel, epitomizes the quintessence of human morality. At last, when we reflect we cannot but feel a sense of loss at the untimely death of heroine. The only solace we cannot find is that by the end of the novel her moral development is complete. So there can be no denying the fact that *The Mill on the Floss* is basically the story of Maggie Tulliver, of her life and suffering and Maggie is the centre of action which cannot be fully appreciated unless we look at it from her point of view. Nevertheless, this novel also gives us a comprehensive and elaborate picture of English rural life in the opening years of the Victorian age and before the dislocation and disintegration caused by the Industrial Revolution.

Works Cited

- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Trans. Jonathan Carp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.Print.
- Bennet, Joan. *George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948.Print.

Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. With an Introduction by Gordon S. Haight (Ed.). London: OUP, 1980. Print.

McConnell, Terrance. *Moral Dilemma and Moral Theory*. Oxford: OUP, 1999. Print.

Water, Allen. *The English Novel: A Critical History*. London: Phoenix House, 1954. Print.

Representation of Same-Sex bonds in Wilkie Collins's Three Major novels

Anindita Bhaumik

Abstract: Wilkie Collins, one of the most popular and prolific novelists whose career spanned most of the second half of the nineteenth century inaugurated the sensation novel and played a key role in shaping detective fiction. Collins's intriguing representation of same-sex bonds challenges the conventional concept of 'masculinity'–'femininity' pairing. His novels not only question the position of women within marriage, but also address the various meanings of 'marriage' itself, unsettling the presumption that it must be based on a heterosexual union. The paper endeavours to explore the novelist's subordination of heterosexual bonds to same sex loyalties in *The Woman in White*, *Armadale* and *The Moonstone*—three highly popular novels published in the 1860s, 'the sensation decade'.

Keywords: Sensation, Same-sex, Convention, Marriage, Perverse, Emotion, Compatibility, Gender

Wilkie Collins, one of the most popular and prolific novelists whose career spanned most of the second half of the nineteenth century inaugurated the sensation novel and played a key role in shaping detective fiction. In recent criticism Collins's reputation has moved from the margins to the mainstream, exploring the complexity of sensation narrative and stressing the radical and subversive elements of his work. The novelist's own unconventional as well as dramatic views and values in the context of the nineteenth century England is very significant here. Collins's intriguing representation of same-sex bonds challenges the conventional concept of 'masculinity'–'femininity' pairing. His novels not only question the position of women within marriage, but also address the various meanings of 'marriage' itself, unsettling the presumption that it must be based on a heterosexual union. While the typical Victorian novel form demands marriage as a means of narrative closure, Collin's conventional couple is offset by a third figure whose relationship to the protagonist constitutes the primary bond. In order to explore Wilkie

Collins's presentation of same-sex bonds, I would like to concentrate on *The Woman in White*, *Armada* and *The Moonstone*—three highly popular novels published in the 1860s, 'the sensation decade'.

In his novels, Collins ingeniously subordinates heterosexual bonds to same sex loyalties. According to Caroline Dever, these same-sex couples 'walk a fine line between affective convention and erotic transgression.' (Dever 113). The union of Marian and Laura in *The Woman in White* can be termed as the novel's most fully realized 'marriage' as it is based on emotional depth, mutual trust and the presumption of permanence. Lyn Pykett has drawn parallels between the sensation novel and the 'New Woman' writing of the 1860s and 1890s. (Pykett 16) Although quite different in tone, style and perspective on femininity, both genres represent 'modern' women possessing privileged knowledge, rationality, enterprise and sense of humour. Marian's characterization in *The Woman in White* challenges the restrictive ideal of Coventry Patmore's 'Angel in the House'. Marian is quite conscious of the conventional Victorian expectation from ideal femininity and she ridicules it. She says in a good-humoured way. "...we produced no such convenience in the house as a flirtable, danceable small-talkable creature of the male sex" (Collins, *The Woman in White*, The First Epoch, Chapter 5, 27). The most interesting thing about her is that she knows her 'non-feminine' appeal and she has no problem with it. Marian says, "I have got nothing, and she (Laura) has a fortune. I am dark and ugly, and she is fair and pretty. Everybody thinks me crabbed and odd (with perfect justice); and everybody thinks her sweet-tempered and charming (with more justice still). In short, she is an angel and I am" (Collins, *The Woman in White*, The First Epoch, Chapter 5, 26)

Yet Marian loves Laura more than anybody else. Her diary represents a world viewed through the eyes of a woman who questions and refuses to accept the conventional perception of reality. She has a clear conception about most of the conventional marriages and the passive roles of women in it. She expresses her own opinion of those women while speaking about Laura's marriage –

"...she was in the position of hundreds of other women, who marry men without being greatly attached to them or greatly repelled by them, and who learn to love them (when they don't learn to hate!) after marriage instead of before".(Collins, *The Woman in White*, The First Epoch, Chapter 9, p55)

This comment reveals Marian's concept of the position of general women within the institution of marriage. Even she refutes the idea of wifely sacrifice for the husband by saying,

“No man under heaven deserves these sacrifices from us women. Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us away from our parents' love and our sister's friendship – they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of them give us in return?”(Collins, *The Woman in White*, The First Epoch, p.140)

She describes Laura's marriage as a death to her.

In *The Woman in White* Marian is seen to be staying outside that institution of marriage. She revolts against the restraints of her 'petticoat existence', she mocks her situation of “...nothing but a woman, condemned to patience, propriety and petticoats for life” (Collins, *The Woman in White*, The Second Epoch, p153).

Marian's narrative in *The Woman in White* falls into two parts, the 'Limmeridge' and 'Blackwater' sections. In the Limmeridge section we see her passionate and devoted love for Laura. She treats Laura almost as a possessive lover. She says in her diary about the marriage of Laura – “she will be his Laura instead of mine!” [Julian Symons suggests that 'Lesbian tendencies' perhaps motivate Marian's feelings toward Laura in his introduction to *The Woman in White* (New York, 1974), p 35]. But in the Blackwater section, she tries to adjust herself to the changed situation of Laura and Laura's passivity in accepting her own fate. But Marian's quick eye and strong sense of perception tell her to be anxious of Laura's safety there. Her journal is not merely a passive receptacle of impressions and a means of self-regulation, but also a vehicle of both compassion and analysis. (Taylor 121)

Collins often represents 'legal' marriage as a sinkhole of hostility, deception, abuse and materialism at the worst form. In *The Woman in White* one can easily notice an erotically pluralist plot under the authorizing cover of the conventional marriage plot. It is evident in the final triangulated marriage in the novel. Both Marian and Walter are passionately attached to Laura. They fight together to protect Laura from her enemies, join households in order to take care for her and help her to regain her lost identity as well as her lost inheritance. When Walter wishes to propose to Laura, he triangulates the proposal through Marian. Conjoined by the

‘masculine’ Marian, ‘Walter and Laura enter a marriage anchored by its essential bisexuality’ (Dever 114).

In *Armada* the gendered plot of *The Woman in White* is shifted to investigate relations between two men presented as ‘brothers’. They not only share a name, ‘Allan Armadale’ (though in order to avoid confusions, one goes by the assumed name, ‘Ozias Midwinter’), but also a history of mutual violence and deception in the earlier generation. Drawn together by fate, the two Armadales are attracted towards each other because of the ‘perverse interest’ and the ‘perverse fancy’. (Collins, *Armada*, Book 2, Chapter I, 65). *Armada* focuses on the contrast of fairness, race, class and personality to signify the bond between two men joined in a friendship in spite of all the differences. Just like Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White*, the two Armadales are remarkably dissimilar in their personalities and physical appearances. Allan Armadale is fair, light-hearted typically English bourgeois; Midwinter is a man of mixed blood, sombre mood, swarthy skin and uncertain background. Allan – Midwinter bond also shows light on an important aspect – the question of free will and destiny. It probes whether individual men and women are bound to a predetermined fate or they are free to create their own futures. Both of them possess a shared past that victimizes the son for his father’s sins. Allan Armadale’s father was disinherited from the family property by his father because of his own degradation. The family name along with the inheritance was given to Matthew Wrentmore, Midwinter’s father. In order to take revenge, Allan’s father returned with the assumed name Fergus Ingleby and won the love and confidence of Wrentmore’s (the new Armadale) intended bride, Miss Blanchard. They eloped eventually, leaving Wrentmore / Armadale furious and frustrated. In turn, the new Armadale killed his deceiver by locking him in a drowning ship. This tale of mutual deception and destruction looms large as a threat to both the sons and to their friendship. When Midwinter is introduced in the novel for the first time, he carries significantly with him in his knapsack two volumes: the plays of Sophocles and Goethe’s *Faust*. These books may symbolize the free will-determinism conundrum which prevails in the novel. At the one hand is *Oedipus Rex*, in which a man is unable to escape his fate, run as he will. At the other is Faust who chooses to damn himself with a clear head. Both tragic heroes are doomed, but in two completely opposite ways.

Indeed, Midwinter and Armadale share a curious relationship. They become fascinated with each other as they meet for the first time. For the protected and sheltered Allan, mysterious Midwinter was the first ‘other’ in his world. In turn, Midwinter’s unflinching loyalty to Allan is a reaction to Allan’s love and care in his illness. Midwinter tells:

“I do love him! It *will* come out of me – I can’t keep it back. I love the very ground he treads on. I would give my life – yes, the life that is precious to me now, because his kindness has made it a happy one – I tell you I would give my life –“(Collins, *Armadale*, Book 2, Ch. 2, 102).

Here Midwinter leaves his speech unfinished, choked by the highly complex task of explaining his ‘perverse’ attraction to Allan. He fails to rationalize his apparently irrational commitment. He also informs Mr. Brock, Allan’s well-wisher who tries to separate these two men with strikingly different social and cultural backgrounds:

“I can resist my own feeling, but I can’t resist the young gentleman (Allan) himself. There’s not another like him in the world...The dog’s master has whistled,...and it’s hard, sir, to blame the dog, when the dog comes.”(Collins, *Armadale*, Book 2, Ch.1, 82-83)

Even Mr. Brock, the old-fashioned tutor of Allan is moved and convinced by Midwinter’s emotion:

“I believe you love Allan...and I believe you have spoken the truth. A man who has produced that impression on me, is a man whom I am bound to trust. I trust you.” (Collins, *Armadale*, Book 2, Ch.2, 103)

On the other hand, it is this ‘strangeness’ of Midwinter that attracts Allan towards him:

“Allan had seen in him – a man who was not cut out on the regular local pattern, and whose way in the world had the one great merit (in those parts) of being a way of his own”. (Collins, *Armadale*, Book 2, Ch.1, 67)

Allan’s view of Midwinter is very significant. In a place where custom-bound sameness of look, manners, habit and thinking prevails, Midwinter is an unavoidable exception. He is like himself,

he is a self-made man. Hunger, poverty, ill-treatment and insecurity have provided him with a rare strength of mind, insight into life and a vast knowledge of the world.

Midwinter defensively explains his love for Allan as 'perverse'. This may not directly refer to Freud's later development of the notion of perversity as primary mode of erotic subjectivity, but it can be symptomatic of the prevailing and unconventional nature of this bond. (Freud, 149--62) The union of these two men is gifted with such an emotional depth and intensity that is entirely absent from other relationships in *Armadale*. It is embattled with fear, anxiety and predestination, but it runs true and deep. No heterosexual relation is invested with such sincerity in this novel. Rather heterosexual relations are shown as flimsy matters of proximity and convenience. Midwinter falls in and out of love with Lydia Gwilt. Allan is convinced to fall in love with Neelie Milroy even before meeting her: he does so, and then rejects her after being infatuated towards Lydia. Interestingly, Collins shows conventional marriage as a result expediency rather than compatibility and emotional commitment. At one point in *Armadale*, Allan said to himself:

“The Question is whether I hadn't better set myself right with my neighbours by becoming a married man?”(Collins, *Armadale*, Book 3, Ch. 6,374).

In contrast, the bond between Allan and Midwinter survives and is strengthened in spite of various tests. The superstitious Midwinter is always afraid of the consequences of their friendship. But he finds himself incapable of walking away, even to avert certain tragedy. Instead, he prefers to fight fate with love. He says,

“I can't believe – I won't believe – that a friendship which has grown out of nothing but kindness on one the side, and nothing but gratitude in the other, is destined to lead to an evil end” (Collins, *Armadale*, Book 2, Ch. 2,103).

The novel concludes not with a marriage but with a separation that reaffirms the emotional bond between the men.

The issue of same sex bonding is again reinforced in the relationship between limping Lucy and Rosanna Spearman. In Rosanna one can see the overlapping of different levels of marginalization. . She is a servant, a woman, a physically deformed former criminal. The

problem with sexuality and gender is reinforced in the character of limping Lucy. This physically handicapped working class girl directly revolts against the so called upper classes. She says, "... the day is not far off when the poor will rise against the rich". (Collins, *The Moonstone*, Ch.23,147) She calls Franklin Blake 'a murderer'. This girl with fierce temper shares a curious relationship with Rosanna. She defies the necessity of the presence of any man in a woman's life, saying, "No man is worth fretting for in that way" (Collins, *The Moonstone*, 173). She speaks about Rosanna – "She might have been happy with me.... That man came here, and spoilt it all. He bewitched her". (Collins, *The Moonstone*, 173). Lucy also feels that the woman with a good education may have got her living nicely without the help of any man. Her voice is rather unusual in the typical Victorian atmosphere.

All these three novels explore the grey areas created by shifting social and legal expectations about love, property and the domestic sphere. Here, the same-sex relations go beyond the established convention of friendship to become an element of sensation plot.

Works cited

Primary Sources:

Collins, Wilkie. *Armadale*. Penguin Classics. Ed. John Sutherland. London, 2004. Print.

..... *The Woman in White*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd. Chatham, Kent, 2002. Print.

Secondary sources:

Dever, Caroline. "The marriage plot and its alternatives". *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*. Ed. J. B. Taylor. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Trans. James Strachey. *The standard Edition*, VII. New York. 1905. Print.

Pykett, Lyn. *The Sensation Novel : From 'The Woman in White' to 'The Moonstone'*. Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994. Print.

Taylor, J. B. *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative and Nineteenth Century Psychology*. London: Routledge, 1988. Print.

Matthew Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna' and the *Bhagavad Gita*

Parneet Jaggi

Abstract: "Empedocles on Etna" proves the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* very well, that the mind of a man can devise a way of life, an ethic to live by in the universe, if the man is an Empedoclean with a painful awareness of ennui. In Empedocles, we find reflections and explorations of a large part of our experience : the scepticism of any ultimate truths, the search for some constructive outlook that can give one 'the courage to be,' the distaste for a society that seems devoid of moral values, the acute self-consciousness, the sense of isolation and loneliness, the suspicion of 'pure' intellectualism, the desire for a wholeness in which the total personality may be alive and active, above all, perhaps, the nostalgia for a lost world of youth and peace and simplicity. In the character of Empedocles and in the two acts of the play respectively, Arnold saw the possibility of portraying both "modern thought" and "modern feeling. He found a mid-way, a path of moderation by reading the *Bhagavad Gita*, which resolved the conflict in his mind more than the philosophers of the West did.

Key Words: *Bhagavad Gita*, awareness, ennui, merger, disillusionment, deliverance.

As a poet in search of a philosophy, Matthew Arnold turned first and for preference to the insights of the poet-philosophers, who included the *Bhagavad Gita* as well as Lucretius and Empedocles. To Arnold, Empedocles, whom he described in the 1853 Preface as "one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus" (Karsten 33) was closer to his 1848 definition of the philosopher than the Epicurean Lucretius with an enthusiasm for science and contempt for religion. Arnold studied Empedocles in Simon Karsten's *Philosophorum Graecorum Veterum...Operum Reliquiae*, which provides an introduction, a Latin translation of the fragments printed opposite the Greek text, detailed notes and a long essay on the philosopher's ideas. But Arnold transferred to the

philosopher “the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui” which he found stamped on the poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*. The melancholy of Arnold’s Empedocles is the romantic melancholy of Byron’s *Manfred*, of George Sand’s *Lélia*, of Senancour’s *Obermann*. But the melancholic stance of Empedocles greatly resembles Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, who facing a crisis seeks divine vision, and finally a merger with the Ultimate Soul.

“Empedocles on Etna” is a philosophical and a dramatic poem. Its theme centers around the contrast between the three ways of life as represented by Callicles, Empedocles, and Pausanias. Callicles is a symbol of youthful joy. His music expresses harmony, and is designed to assist nature with its soothing restorative power. It is unperplexed and the product of the mythical imagination. Pausanias is Empedocles’ physician, a good, learned, friendly, quiet man. In this drama he can be interpreted as the “physician of souls.” He follows Empedocles up the mountain because he had heard about the miracle of calling a woman back to life, performed by Empedocles. But he does not receive the desired secret from Empedocles, instead, is the recipient of a lengthy discourse which offers him a better view of the world. Empedocles is a philosopher who has a direct, not a mythical knowledge of reality. In the prose outline which Arnold drew up for the poem, he says, “He sees things as they are- the world as it is – God as he is : in their stern simplicity. The sight is a severe and mind-tasking one: to know the mysteries which are communicated to others in fragments, in parables” (Tinker, Lowry 291). The hero frequently unites in himself an element of the infinite with an element of the finite.

In the opening lecture at Oxford, given five years after the publication of this major poem, Arnold began by saying that an “intellectual deliverance” was the peculiar demand of those ages and those nations that could be called modern. This is the role in which Empedocles is cast and which he plays in Act I. And this is exactly the role that Lord Krishna inspires Arjuna to play in the *Gita*, and what Buddha tells his disciple Purna to do. Arnold quoted this anecdote in his inaugural lecture, when he talked of moral deliverance. “Go then, O Purna,” are his words, “having been delivered, deliver; having been consoled, console; being arrived thyself at the farther back, enable others to arrive there also”(Arnold 18). In Act II, depression and ennui dominate the scene. There is a sense of restlessness, frustration and futility, deep fatigue of body and spirit, isolation and loneliness, cosmic and social, and therefore also a nostalgia for an earlier age of peace, faith and moral integrity. In the character of Empedocles and in the two acts of the play respectively, Arnold saw the possibility of portraying both “modern thought” and “modern feeling.” When Empedocles, at the end of his solitary discourse, cries aloud for air “The air is thin, the veins swell,/The temples tighten and throb there-/Air! Air! (Allott 184)

he is acknowledging that he does not really belong to this region, that he lives its life at his peril. Arnold himself had felt being under the same situation, and bore this burden. Writing to Clough in February 1853, he declared, “Yes – congestion of the brain is what we suffer from– I always feel it and say it – and cry for air like my own Empedocles.”(Lowry 130)

In the poem, Empedocles is like the barren cone of the crater, Pausanias like the city – a hot dusty plain and Callicles like the fertile and woody region. The movement of Empedocles through the scenes represents the movement from youth to middle age, and from contentment to near despair. Callicles is beloved of Empedocles as a kind of ‘self when young’ before he had plunged too deeply into the philosophical problems which have undone his content. The movement from innocence to experience, from the comfort of traditional beliefs to the painful vision of reality, is a movement in time that the poem renders spatially. In Act I, Empedocles’ disillusionment at the condition of Sicily shows Arnold’s distaste for the commercial and democratic character of modern society:

Heaven is with earth at strife,

Signs make thy soul afraid,

The dead return to life,

Rivers are dried, winds stayed;

Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the Gods; (161)

His words to Pausanias “Be neither saint nor sophist– led, but be a man” (161) reflect Arnold’s doctrine and his dividedness in religion and empiricism. He, all the time, seems to attempt to synthesize the strands of romanticism and rationalism, faith and empiricism. Behind this struggle, of course, lies the diminution of the power of Christianity, the strong influence of Cardinal Newman on the one hand, and empirical works of science like Darwin’s *Origin of Species* on the other. To add further, it has historical criticism far more than science which jarred the foundations of orthodoxy. The great religious questions of the time were: Did the biblical miracles occur or did they not? How to explain the presence of evil in a world made by a just and benevolent God? Christianity did answer such questions but it had lost the ability to make such replies convincing. There were surely substitute answers available to the Christian society as well as for Arnold. He could agree with Goethe, or Shaftesbury or Pope that evil really works good, he could agree with Carlyle that in the long run evil is defeated, he could reason with James Mill that evil disproves the existence of a just or benevolent God, or with Spinoza, that the concept of evil is

strictly of human invention, not an absolute, that nothing is good or bad in itself, that there is indeed a God but neither just or benevolent nor yet cruel because not personal, that the moral content of the universe outside the human realm is exactly zero. But none of these answers were convincing, not even comforting to Arnold. His poem "Mycerinus" is a sharp expression of the religious expression of his age. To find an answer, convincing as well as comforting, Arnold had to turn his face towards the East. He found a mid-way, a path of moderation by reading the *Bhagavad Gita*, which resolved the conflict in his mind more than the philosophers of the West did.

"Empedocles on Etna" proves the philosophy of the *Gita* very well, that the mind of a man can devise a way of life, an ethic to live by in the universe, if the man is an Empedoclean with a painful awareness of ennui and a recognition like a wise man who "In his own bosom delves" (161). In the same scene he tells emphatically to Pausanias:

Once read thy own breast right,

And thou hast done with fears;

Man gets no other light,

Search he a thousand years.

Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine! (162)

The same predicament is portrayed in the *Gita*, in which Arjuna looks for a solution to his crisis and yearns for solace and a glimpse of the Supreme. To this, Krishna's soothing reply in the chapter "*Vibhuti Yoga, the Path of Divine Perfections*" is:

I am the Spirit seated deep in every creature's heart; (Edwin Arnold 82)

On the other hand, Buddhism goes deeper and more elaborately into the working of the soul and prepares a special mind called "*bodhichitta*". The whole concept of Buddhism starts with looking into oneself and training one's mind in a way to work for the enlightenment and ultimate salvation of the soul, called *Nirvana*. Just like a Buddhist "*bodhisattva*" trains his mind to free himself from the '*samsara*' and all its sufferings, in the same way, Empedocles attempts to become a Foe Destroyer, who destroys the inner enemies of attachment, hatred and self-grasping ignorance, by advocating to Pausanias the way of life and himself plunging into the crater. Towards the end of Act I, his ascending the mountain is symbolic of his mounting determination of meeting his doom, just as a *bodhisattva*

attains tranquil abiding by the strenuous training and experience of his mind, and then his concentration cannot be disturbed by conceptual thoughts. This is the stance of Empedocles. Like a *bodhisattva* who enters a meditative equipoise on emptiness, Empedocles abandons the colorful woody regions to plunge into the fiery deluge which acts as the direct antidote to the very subtle obstructions to omniscience. Before this, the conflict was between Empedocles and the social world of man, now it is between Empedocles and nature. But then, as he contemplates that death will take the four elements in his body – body, blood, head and breath back to the elements in nature, he asks-

But mind, but thought...

What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home? (189)

For Arnold the resolution of this dilemma is not through the mind but through soul. Then Empedocles reflects over the doctrine of rebirth, according to which we will once more fall away into some bondage of the flesh or mind, this will continue till we come

To our own only true, deep-buried selves,

Being one with which we are one with the whole world; (190)

This is analogous to an extract given in the *Note-Books of Matthew Arnold*:

Buddha of Magadha

Upadana – the cleaving to existing objects,...

these cause new births till *Nirvana* annihilates them. (Hardy 394)

But for Empedocles, being one with “the whole world” means being with the “All,” and he understands that the way to know this All is not by exaggerating one part of our nature at the expense of another, but by achieving a balance or harmony among them. The answer then to his malady is that it has its source in his own nature. In this context, Culler writes that “If Arnold is thinking in terms of the *Bhagavad Gita*, as he probably is, then what Empedocles comes to understand is that the *Atman*, or individual soul, is identical with the *Brahman*, or universal soul” (Culler 171). Empedocles’ suicide is a complex act. On the one hand, it is indicated that Empedocles will not attain complete freedom or complete merger with the “All” but will be forced to go through a series of reincarnations. On the other hand, he will not be completely enslaved, as he himself says,

His achievement in the last moment of his life is of utmost importance. In Hindu philosophy, the hour of death is considered as decisive of man's fate ahead. Culler says that "Arnold found in the *Bhagavad Gita*, whose thought is very closely related to the Orphic religion of Empedocles, the idea that the disposition of one's mind at the hour of death is very important in determining the soul's state after death" (Cullar 174). He quotes from F. Edgerton's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (VIII, 6) : "Whatever condition of being one meditates on as he leaves the body at death precisely to that condition he goes, his whole being infused therewith." (Cullar 174). J. Hillis Miller says, "The last consequence of man's transformation into mind is the worst of all. A man who is wholly mind is unable to die. He is doomed, as in a passage from Eastern philosophy which Arnold recorded in his note books, to the horror of the external return" (Miller 37). Here Miller is referring to the quotation that appears in Arnold's note books, extracted from Sir William Jones' translation of *Manava Dharma Sastra*. Continuing the same thought, Miller says that the discovery that man may be condemned to 'be astray for ever' is the climax not only of "Empedocles of Etna," but of all Arnold's experience. Arnold's complete experience and thought is dominated by the thought of irreconcilable opposites. As Frank Kermode puts it, "The answer to his dilemma, in the terms in which he undoubtedly understood it, lay in the cruel effort and continued self – expenditure of a series of Empedoclean victories, not in the carefully qualified betrayal, the compromise of art and life, action and inaction, which his *Mask as Critic* represents" (Kermode 18-19).

Arnold withdrew the poem in all editions between 1852 and 1867, and justified his withdrawal in the Preface to the *Poems* of 1853. It was at the instance of Robert Browning's admiration that "Empedocles on Etna" was included in the volume of *New Poems* in 1867, and was appreciated far and wide. William Robbins remarks, "Clearly the course for humanity is not to follow the scepticism of Empedocles to its logical conclusion, but to embrace the melioristic stoicism suggested to Pausanias, as Arnold does himself" (Robins 97). Stopford A. Brooke points out that as Empedocles escapes by flinging himself into the crater of Etna, "Had Arnold been a Greek he might, perhaps, have shuffled off his trouble in the same easy fashion" (Brooke 80). He did not do so. He did not follow the Greek disposition of mind, but gathered immense moral and spiritual strength, to strive to "attain or approach perfection in the region of thought or feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form" (Russell 60). His survey of the oriental literature and philosophy helped him reach his goal to a great extent, as is evident from his letters, lists of readings and his note-books. Turning his head away from the dogmatic Christianity, he

absorbed various ideas and doctrines of the oriental philosophy, especially those of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The observation of Kenneth Allott is relevant here, that “He studied Goethe or Lucretius or the *Bhagavad Gita* for enlightenment, but also obscurely, to obtain spiritual reassurance, and this second purpose grew more explicit as time went on” (Allott 57). This “spiritual reassurance” is quite evident and discernable in the poem. “Empedocles on Etna” is best analyzed in the words of Walter E. Houghton. He says that “To read ‘Empedocles’ is to find reflections and explorations of a large part of our experience : the scepticism of any ultimate truths, the search for some constructive outlook that can give one ‘the courage to be,’ the distaste for a society that seems devoid of moral values, the acute self-consciousness, the sense of isolation and loneliness, the suspicion of ‘pure’ intellectualism, the desire for a wholeness in which the total personality may be alive and active, above all, perhaps, the nostalgia – though firmly repressed today and rarely mentioned- for a lost world of youth and peace and simplicity”(Houghton 106). Treating “Empedocles on Etna” as the most impressive poem of its length written in the Victorian period, Houghton says that these features of the poem are timeless and contemporary, and they “touch our lives at a significant depth.” This is what Arnold struggled to achieve all through his life.

Works Cited

- Allott, Kenneth. “A Background for ‘Empedocles on Etna’ ” in *Matthew Arnold*. Ed. David J. DeLaura. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973. Print.
- Allott, Kenneth. *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*. London : Longmans, 1965. Print.
- Arnold, Sir Edwin. *The Song Celestial : Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. 1885; New Delhi: Interprint, 1978. Print.
- Arnold, Matthew. ‘On the Modern Element in literature’ in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*. Ed. R.H. Super, vol. 1. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960. Print.
- Brooke, Stopford A. *Four Victorian Poets*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964. Print.
- Culler, A. Dwight. *Imaginative Reason : The Poetry of Matthew Arnold* . New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966. Print.

Hardy, R. Spence. *A Manual of Buddhism* . London and Edinburgh, 1860. Print.

Houghton, Walter E. "Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna'," *Victorian Studies* 1 (1958) : 311-36; rpt. in *Critics on Matthew Arnold*, ed. Jacqueline E.M. Latham. New Delhi : Universal, 1998. Print.

Karsten, Simon. *Philosophorum Graecorum Veterum ... Operum Reliquiae*, ii. Amsterdam, 1838.

Kermode , Frank. *Romantic Image* . London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957. Print.

Lowry, H.F. Ed. *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. Print.

Miller, J. Hillis. 'Matthew Arnold' in *Matthew Arnold*. Ed. David J. DeLaura. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973. Print.

Robbins, William. *The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold*. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1959. Print.

Russell, G.W.E. Ed. *Letters of Matthew Arnold*. vol. 1. New York: Macmillan, 1895. Print.

Tinker, C.B. and H.F. Lowry. *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold : A Commentary*. London: OUP, 1940. Print.

Sherlock Holmes: The Myth Reworked

Purnima Chakraborti

Abstract: As the impact of the fictional characters of Holmes and Watson and the fictional world they inhabit has been a long and enduring one on the reader's imagination subsequent writers have both imitated and deconstructed this stable world of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic detective stories. The mythic figure of Holmes offers many possibilities of rethinking the past and the present. In this paper I have tried to discuss why myths can be transformed or reworked and analysed how this has been done in M. J. Trow's novel *Brigade: The Further Adventures of Lestrade* (first published in 1987). By changing the positions of Holmes and Lestrade within the story M J Trow foregrounds the position of the marginalized in Victorian society and undermines the figure of Holmes. Gyles Brandreth's Oscar Wilde murder mystery series (published since 2007) which I have discussed next on the other hand inflates Holmes by grafting him to the brilliant artist Oscar Wilde. I conclude by discussing the film serial *Sherlock* (2010 onwards) where consultant detective Sherlock and consultant criminal Moriarty are engaged in a battle of wits in twenty first century London.

Key Words: Myths, Transformation, Expanding, Updating

Contemporary writing featuring Holmes referred to as the Holmes apocrypha, recreates by selecting from and adding on to the stories of Conan Doyle. In this paper I shall consider three contemporary approaches to myth of Sherlock Holmes: I shall start with M. J. Trow's novel *Brigade: The Further Adventures of Lestrade*, first published in 1987, and then move on to Gyles Brandreth's murder mystery series, published since 2007 where we find the fictional characters of Oscar Wilde, Conan Doyle and Robert Sherard. I shall conclude by considering the film serial *Sherlock* (2010 onwards) featuring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson, directed by Mark Mc Guin produced by Sue Vertue written by Steven Moffat and co-created by Mark Gatiss which presents an updated version of the myth of Holmes.

Sherlock Holmes who seized the imagination of his readers has remained a constant focus of attention since his first appearance. That fiction has rapidly turned into a popular myth is only too obvious from the importance he finds in Madame Taussauds and in his museum. His fictional address has become a tourist attraction signifying immortality not only for himself and Watson but also for the fictional world he inhabited. Many people who have not heard of Conan Doyle know about Sherlock Holmes. The Holmes industry a prime centre of tourist interest in

London, occupies a more universal space as it invades cinemas, T V serials, romances, cartoons and contemporary detective novels.

The Sherlock Holmes stories reflect what the Victorians and Conan Doyle stood for. In her *Introduction to The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (2009) P. D. James explains why the stories and their writer had appeared so attractive to the reader:

No writer achieves fame without meeting the needs and expectations of his age. The Sherlock Holmes saga provided for an increasingly literate society and the emergence of middleclass with stories which were original, accessible, exciting and with occasional frisson of horror to which the Victorians were not averse. Conan Doyle was himself a representative of his sex and class. He was a man his fellow countrymen could understand, a stalwart imperialist, patriotic, courageous, resourceful and with the self-confidence to congratulate himself on having 'the strongest influence over young men, especially young athletic sporting men, than anyone in England bar Kipling.' (James vii)

The stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle uphold an ideology and world view that satisfies the Victorian reader. The myth of the detective, well established in the nineteenth century, resonates particularly well through the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries and the figure of Holmes is its popular icon. The stories being masterpieces of detective fiction were read and reread by generations of readers. They helped define the genre and fix its borders and limits. The Sherlock Holmes stories have generated a vast body of critical writing and inspired other writers in this genre. As Stephen Knight explains the detective appears in fiction at a time when the Romantic Movement had glorified an individual's subjective consciousness. The individual hero dominated Romantic prose and poetry. Knight shows us how the basic myth of good and evil found in folklore and fairy tale has been combined here with the Victorian virtue of self help. The Holmes version of the moral battle of good and evil involves a mythical belief in the detective's superior powers of observation and reasoning to arrive at the truth. The stories uphold an ideology of a benevolent class conscious society keen on preserving its social hierarchy. The criminal is mostly seen not as a social but as a moral disorder.

When a myth seems to provide answers that are inadequate to our present circumstances we tend to take it apart. As we need to read newer meanings to explain the changing universe around us we have to update the myths in accordance with our own times. In *Mythologies* Roland Barthes reconsiders the notion of what a myth means to us: the making and breaking of the myth 'transforms history into nature'(Barthes129). A myth, which according to Barthes, arrests a concept in both the physical and legal sense of the term is subject to transformations –

This is because myth is speech *stolen* and *restored*. Only speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen: when it was brought back it was not put exactly in place. (Barthes 125)

The process of transformation lies at the very heart of the myth:

For the Nature, in which they are locked up under the pretext of being eternalized, is nothing but an Usage. And it is this Usage however lofty, that they must take in hand and transform. (Barthes 155-156)

Crime writers who approach the myth of Holmes today do so with the century old Holmes tradition behind them. Social and literary research on the times of Conan Doyle has opened up vast spaces and writers of crime fiction are negotiating land outside the conventional borders of the genre. Through the twentieth century (especially in the latter half) we have a tradition of crime writing that prioritizes perspectives of characters who are not detectives. Readers and writers aware of their social responsibilities towards those on the wrong side of the law feel the need to integrate zones which were either scantily represented or neglected in an earlier epoch. New stories on Holmes often decentralize, extend, and question the upper class male centered detective tradition. They are engaged in the process of stealing and restoring myths, each makeover trying to grasp a meaning for the moment.

The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives us the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For, if we penetrate the object, we liberate it; but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. (Barthes 159)

In their narratives Trow and Brandreth have taken apart, reassembled and extended the myth to meet the expectations of readers today. We need to read this playfulness with reference to the genre of the detective story in which picking up and rejecting clues is routine exercise for the reader. The transformations that I shall look at mainly concern Holmes, Watson and the fictional world they inhabit.

One of the important conventions of the Sherlock Holmes stories is that of the narrator. Conan Doyle draws our attention to the teller. The tale is told by Watson but Holmes has his reservations about Watson's narrations. In *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange* the following conversation takes place between Holmes and Watson while they are on a Kentish train on a winter morning to investigate a case of murder.

"...Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over the work of utmost finesse and delicacy, in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite but cannot possibly instruct, the reader."

"Why do you not write them yourself?" I said with some bitterness.

“I will, my dear Watson, I will. At present I am, as you know, fairly busy, but I propose to devote my declining years to the composition of a text book, which shall focus the whole art of detection into one volume.”(Conan Doyle 636)

The idea of retelling the story is suggested in the foundational text. The cue is picked up by Trow in *Brigade: The Further Adventures of Lestrade*. Firstly he replaces the first person narrator Watson with an omniscient narrator making Watson a teller of stories within a story. This is the most obvious narrative transformation. It helps to lend the tale an impression of greater impartiality, as though this retelling is a truer version. Yet though aspiring to be detached the omniscient narrator is seen to be following Lestrade with all his attention sympathetically focused on him.

Secondly Trow's novels project stories of crime from Inspector Sholto Lestrade's perspective. This is obviously a case of refocalization which discards a very central tenet of the tradition: the private detective. The well educated detective who is endowed with tremendous mental prowess, extraordinary powers of observation, brilliant deduction and a passion for justice is turned into a piece of irresponsible deception and made the butt of jokes. The hard work, that solves mysterious crime, is done by the ill paid police detective, Lestrade, whose experiences reflect some of the actual social conditions connected with crime in Victorian England. As the cases are solved by Lestrade the cosy world of Baker Street is replaced by the Criminal Investigation Department of Her Majesty's Metropolitan Police in Scotland Yard. But many of the recurring motifs in the Conan Doyle stories, like the hostility between Lestrade and his superiors, are reabsorbed in Trow's novel. Lestrade's life is a hard one. He is battling a new boss and harsh working conditions as he is tackling a difficult case. Thirdly Trow drags Conan Doyle into the fictional world of the novel making him inhabit the same world of Watson and Lestrade. This is in keeping with the postmodern fictional norms which combine fictional and historical worlds.

Watson, in Trow's novel, transforms the adventures of Lestrade into the adventures of Holmes in the *Strand Magazine*.

He[Lestrade, waiting for a train to Swindon]browsed through the periodicals on the shelves of the W. H. Smith bookstall and he shuddered as his fingers alighted on a copy of the *Strand Magazine*. For a moment he wondered if that idiot Watson was still feeding Conan Doyle those ludicrous stories about Sherlock Holmes, even though the man had been dead these eighteen months. He had no time to ponder as the whistle was blowing and he dashed through the steam to catch the twenty past two for Exeter. (Trow 20)

In *Brigade* we find a distorted version of Conan Doyle's Watson. Trow's Watson is seen as a shrewd manipulator who is ever afraid that Lestrade might blow the cover of this fictional conspiracy. Though he remains a doctor and a story teller he is extremely incompetent and

meddlesome. As it turns out, it is Watson, not Lestrade, who has failed to notice the murder victim when he is asked to certify his death. And though Watson realizes his mistake he does not acknowledge it.

Conan Doyle's stories portray Lestrade as a fool or regard him in a condescending light, for instance in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* Lestrade must handcuff the criminal as Holmes very generously disclaims any credit for catching a murderer. Holmes makes the hero's reentry into a world which sorely needs him as a savior. Lestrade here is used as the foolish foil. Colin Watson has summed up the charm of Holmes's world in *Snobbery with Violence*:

The London of Holmes commends itself at once and unconditionally. It is quaint enough to make nostalgic appeal. It is exceedingly well ordered: those telegraphic offices are never closed, no cab is ever otherwise than within instant hail... It is a city whose every crime is soluble and whose vices are sealed narrow and defined areas. It is a cosy place. (Watson 24)

In Trow this 'cosy place' has been replaced by the seamier world of reality: the world expands by including, in a big way, institutions like the hospitals, mad houses, and workhouses. Lestrade is acutely aware of the deceptions practiced by the upper classes in policy, politics and personal life and he is also aware of the misery of the poor. Lestrade solves the mystery through sheer hard work, commonsense and intuition. His very lack of erudition and his determination to spare himself no trouble help him to solve the crime. Hence we have heroism of adaptation and resistance. In Trow's novel Lestrade is seen getting his own back prizing at the interstices of Conan Doyle's stories.

The case Lestrade is working on is a series of murders carried on by a mole in the police department. The plot is complicated by the appearance of a fierce animal smuggled in from the colonies. The real murderer in this story is more dangerous and far more cunning than this wild animal. This motif of a wild animal is a familiar one to readers of Conan Doyle's stories and it has been made even more memorable by the subsequent engagements of film directors and cartoonists with stories like *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Speckled Band*. Trow neatly amalgamates the terrifying wild animal from the colonies, with several associated motifs regarding the colonizers and the colonized like the depiction of an enslaved aborigine skilled in hunting and fond of outdoor life and the colonial master with his scant respect for the law from stories like *The Sign of Four*. The reader of Victorian crime fiction is well versed in these attitudes which have been reinforced by novels like *The Moonstone*.

Trow is not only decentering or deheroizing Holmes who exists as a fiction within a fiction but destabilizing in fiction the notions of the civilized country ruling over colonies associated with danger and crime. In *Brigade* the white colonizers are burdened with an act of cannibalism: the eating of a Turkish boy taking the colonizers a little beyond the bounds which were permissible in the Conan Doyle stories where they are usually seen to be tainted by a greed

for money and a love for violence for several selfish reasons. Cannibalism associated with the colonized is neatly transferred to the British army in *Brigade*. Through the absurd rituals carried on by the men who were members of the golden dawn the novel relates cannibalism and war and locates the heart of darkness within the European mind. The resolution offers the final insight into crimes committed and crimes repeated in order to keep crimes hidden.

The novel is a meaningful reworking of several myths. The plot is a retake on Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. It not only destabilizes the myth of Holmes but also the myth of Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Drawing together two fictional worlds the story dwells on the inefficiency and the cruelty of the military campaign that was more shameful than glorious. The reader looks back at the past from a postcolonial perspective aware of the context of the myth and at the world as it must have been. The impression the reader gets is that the fairy tale world of the myth is changing back to reality. The transformations steal the entire world view of the Conan Doyle stories. After being stolen they cannot be put back in exactly the same place for the reader.

As we move from Trow's *Brigade* to the Oscar world murder mystery series we find ourselves in a world of writers and painters. The stance adopted by the narrator in these novels is that of a biography of Wilde, the detective, who had solved many murder mysteries which were so far unknown. This fictional biography is written by Robert Sherard. He is the surrogate narrator/Watson and Wilde is the surrogate Holmes. The novel uses pastiche to extend the myth of Oscar Wilde, and project Wilde as a detective who out does Holmes. This is done by giving Holmes a flitting presence within Wilde's mind and within this world. The world of Holmes is transformed as one fictional world is engrafted upon another.

The novels soak up the world of Wilde's plays, novels, stories and essays. The series starts with *Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders* at a time when Wilde, who is about to commence writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, becomes acquainted with Conan Doyle after having read his novel *A Study in Scarlet*. They meet at Langham Hotel where Wilde surprises his friends by his observations and deductions about Conan Doyle, who asks him for his 'methodology' after Wilde modestly tells him that this is 'scarcely a three-pipe problem' (Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 11). Oscar Wilde introduces the mystery to Conan Doyle at this very first meeting and in the course of the day surprises Conan Doyle and Robert Sherard, Wilde's friend who is the narrator in this series, by his ability to observe and deduce. To his amazed friends he disclaims all credit telling them that this is 'elementary stuff' and as a tribute to Conan Doyle adds that he is 'following the rules of the master'. As man who wished to merge art and life he aptly says 'Holmes is where my heart is!' (Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 19). When asked to explain Wilde answers 'We must not let daylight in on magic, Robert. The conjuror's trick once explained seems very commonplace.' (Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 20) It certainly seems to be the conjuror's trick, for in no real life account of Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde would they come together to solve murder mysteries. Perhaps they come together because they share the common ground of skilful narrative inversions.

‘And he composes,’ I added in the hope of sustaining the conversation. ‘Willie Wilde creates the wittiest musical parodies and pastiches.’

‘Yes,’ said Oscar, still staring out of the window. ‘Caricature is the tribute that mediocrity pays to genius.’ (Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 25)

In these novels the reader is made more and more aware of the shared brilliance of Holmes and Wilde. Oscar Wilde is always admired by Conan Doyle and in *Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders* we find the creator of Sherlock Holmes including Wilde in his stories:

‘Correct!’ cried Conan Doyle, clinking the side of his glass against Oscar’s. ‘You do not miss a trick, my friend. You observe everything. I have decided that I am going to give Mr Sherlock Holmes an even more brilliant older brother and, with your permission, he shall be modeled on you! Holmes is based mostly on Dr Bell, but he has something of Fraser about him also. Holmes’s brother will be entirely you Oscar —’

‘But I am not like Holmes,’ Oscar protested. I am not a man of action I am indolent.’
‘Holmes’s brother shall be indolent then,’ replied Conan Doyle. ‘Do not argue with me. I have decided. It is settled.’ (Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 123)

We hear the echoes of Wildean comedy as Constance and Oscar Wilde converse in *Oscar Wilde and a Game called Murder*:

“It’s far too warm for crumpets, Oscar,” Constance protested.

“Alliteration is no respecter of seasons, my dear” he said.

(Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 44)

This delightful world of word magic meets several other aspects of Wilde’s life and works. The fin-de-siècle world, that is brought alive in the novels, is one where the rational world of Holmes meets superstitions, a depiction of sensational crimes, and the marginal sections of London society Wilde was acquainted with. Crimes like trafficking in child prostitutes or a woman killing her fiancé’s catamite were out of bounds for Holmes. It is also a far more menacing world where every individual feels thwarted by authority and threatened by poverty. There is hardly any hope of social justice and in despair men and women turn for comfort to friends and relations for what love or compassion they can find, and when such comfort is denied, at times, to crime. Building up a world of beauty to escape or seeking refuge in the world of art is a temptation hard to resist for Wilde and his friends.

Wilde who plays Holmes must have his Watson. He asks Robert Sherard to take on this role: “Note it all in your journal. Remember, you are my Dr Watson now.” (Brandreth, *Oscar Wilde and a Game called Murder* 92) Through the series Wilde has both Conan Doyle and

Robert Sherard with him to share the mysteries. The narrator and Wilde are loyal to each other through out, but the persona of Sherard who tells the tale does so without Wilde's comprehension of it. Among the biographical notes which are found at the end of the first novel of the series, we have one on Robert Sherard who wrote the first three biographical studies of Wilde after his death. The choice of Sherard as a narrator is a wise one, for as one of Oscar Wilde's friends and fellow writers, his narrative seems to naturally encapsulate world of the theatre managers, actors, painters and writers. In *De Profundis* Oscar Wilde referring to Sherard's visit in prison writes: "Robert Sherard, that bravest and most chivalrous of all brilliant beings". (Wilde 580)

As Sherard introduces himself at the beginning of the series, he tells the reader that he is sharing these experiences with him/her in the summer of 1939, as 'an old man' who is now, sick and has 'a tale' to tell before he dies.

As in a forest of pine-trees in southern France there are great black, burnt-up patches, so too in my memory. There is much that I have forgotten, much that I have tried to forget, but what you will read in the pages that follow I know to be true. In the years of our friendship, I had kept a journal of our times together. I promised Oscar that for fifty years I would keep his secret. I have kept my word. And now the time has come when I can break my silence. At last I can reveal all that I know of Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders. (Brandreth, *Candlelight Murders* 333-334).

It is under these circumstances that Sherard, the teller of the tale, is recreating a past experience. He may choose to write the mystery as a first person narrator, or as in *Oscar Wilde and the Vampire Murders* he may present the facts by laying out the material in a chronological order, including entries 'From the notebooks of Robert Sherard'. *Oscar Wilde and the Vampire Murders* opens with a conversation between Sherard and Oscar Wilde a few months before Wilde's death in 1900. In the course of this conversation Sherard asks Wilde to publish the book for earning money, but is reminded by Wilde that this book cannot be published for a hundred years. Through Sherard the reader relates to Wilde and his tragedy and to the hypocrisy of Victorian society which is the context of the *Vampire Murders*. Conan Doyle had lost touch with Wilde at the end of his life, but Sherard had remained faithful. By situating the narrative in the distant past, the story of Wilde's success as a detective when he enjoyed wealth and fame is framed by his imprisonment, poverty and illness prior to his early death. Historical crime fiction is one of the most popular sub-genres today. Recreating and interpreting the past gives the reader one more world to reckon with. The world of Holmes is enlarged greatly in the Oscar Wilde murder mysteries yet it confines itself to the basic norms of the genre, the reader is reassured with the neat endings, the first person narrator, and delighted with a detective who is a champion of beauty, wit and elegance. These norms are important in a genre that prioritizes readability.

The foundational texts of the Sherlock Holmes stories have been adapted in several film versions for a century. Adaptation to the film medium involves cinematographic transformation.

The well known productions like the one featuring Jeremy Brett are faithful to the original text. The appearance, the speech, and depiction of Holmes, Watson and the other characters closely resemble the original text. There is a close relation between the oral and visual media. The serial *Sherlock* however follows a different tradition, here the original story is a point of takeoff.

As in Conan Doyle's story Watson is nursing a bullet wound from the Afghan war. The facts are the same only the century has changed. The sub text of the war and Britain's involvement in Afghanistan even today cannot be ignored. John Watson a doctor who is a war victim suffers from psychological trauma, needs counseling and is asked to write a blog to get used to civilian life. In *A Study in Pink* it is through John (there is this transformation in nomenclature 'Watson' has changed to 'John' and 'Holmes' to 'Sherlock') that the viewer meets Sherlock the consultant detective. Sherlock reads John's past by reading the mobile phone (in place of his watch as narrated in *The Sign of Four*). The last word the murder victim writes is the password to her email account. Hospitals, labs, crime dens, homes, the police and the way the characters dress have been transformed in keeping with the times. A transformation in time is the most important transformation in the film. We find women working in the morgue and policewomen detectives working on cases. The hansom cab has disappeared in the transformed city of London aglow with electric and electronic devices, traffic signals, and enormous glass and concrete structures. Most of these transformations are substitutions. Verbal transformations bring in current attitudes and the *three pipe problem* becomes a *three patch problem* as Sherlock who is trying hard to give up smoking wears three nicotine patches on his arm. The most accommodating landlady Mrs Hudson however is seen complaining about Sherlock's revolver practice in the drawing room and his storing of various parts of the human body in the fridge. She reminds her tenants time and again that they have to do their own domestic chores as she is their landlady, not their housekeeper. This is a less class conscious society as she and her tenants celebrate Christmas together with their family and close friends.

Modern technology, gadgets, bombs other weaponry are used by the state, the criminal organizations and the terrorists. Borders dividing the criminals and the detectives also become dangerously fragile. Mary, Watson's wife has links with terrorists. In *A Study in Pink* Mycroft is a menacing figure. Statecraft makes him crafty. The motif of sibling jealousy has been identified by John. Neither Mycroft nor Moriarty are to be trusted. And these two figures take up a far greater space in the film version than they do in the foundational text. Moriarty is the updated twentieth century version of the elusive and intellectually gifted criminal consultant. The episodes of the serial, which merge and transform the stories, project a world far more terrifying than the one found in the Conan Doyle stories. Mechanized and technologically advanced crime and warfare often bring the world on the brink of a disaster. Not only does Moriarty loom larger than he does in the works of Conan Doyle, the chances of Sherlock achieving justice for the wronged are also fewer.

What the Victorians valued or feared has changed: these transformations are in keeping with the changes brought about by history and international politics. The treasures smuggled are those lost during Mao's reign and Irene Adler (who is transformed greatly following the women in James Bond films) is thought to be executed by terrorists. The most interesting transformation which alters our interpretation of the world of Holmes is the menacing aspect of Mycroft's character suggesting a rivalry between him and Holmes. There is also the hint of a link between the incomprehensible policies of war and statecraft of a government represented by Mycroft and the criminal underworld of Moriarty. This is suggested in *A Study in Pink* where Watson mistakes Mycroft for the criminal and finds it hard to believe that he is Sherlock's brother. Visually the link between the criminal and the state is further intensified when Moriarty is seen wearing the crown jewels. Watson blames Mycroft for Sherlock's death: he is seen as a man who would risk his brother's life for his or the Government's gains. By adapting Holmes and his world to the material, social, and psychological and changes of the twenty-first century this film serial renews the myth of Holmes.

Among the many literary worlds that have migrated to contemporary fiction the world of Sherlock Holmes offers many attractions which the contemporary writer wishes to appropriate. Holmes being one of the immortal figures of popular fiction is easily recognized by readers who can spot him through every altered perspective. The writer may build up a history that maps other worlds on Holmes's world. This results in shifting and changing patterns of the past which expand and defamiliarize it. The world of Holmes can be meaningfully read from the margins, from the view point of the ill paid police detective or subversive artist, it presents a different aspect just as it does when 221B Baker Street is located in London today.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*, Trans. Annette Lavers. London: Paladin Books, 1973. Print.
- Brandreth, Gyles. *Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders*. London: John Murray, 2007. Print.
- Brandreth, Gyles. *Oscar Wilde and a Game called Murder*. New York: Touchstone, 2008. Print.
- Brandreth, Gyles. *Oscar Wilde and the Vampire Murders*. New York: Touchstone, 2011. Print.
- Conan Doyle, Arthur. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*. London: Vintage, 2009. Print.
- Trow, M.J. *Brigade: The Further Adventures of Lestrade*. Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2000. First Published in 1987. Print.
- Wilde, Oscar in *Oscar Wilde: Plays, Prose Writings and Poems*. Ed. Terry Eagleton, 1962, repr. London: Everyman's Library, 1991. Print.

Secondary Sources

James, P.D. Introduction to *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle. London: Vintage, 2009. Print.

Knight, Stephen. *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980. Print.

Watson, Colin. *Snobbery with Violence*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971. Print.

Memory and Writing: A Study of Hardy's 'Poems of 1912-13'

Sudip Kumar Das

Abstract: His first wife, Emma's death initiated Hardy's astonishingly retentive memory towards the composition of 'Poems of 1912-13' which appeared as a segment of *Satires of Circumstance*. The resourcefulness with which Hardy's varied moods are translated into poems calls into mind Shakespeare's famous sonnets and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Nostalgia over the past results in pathos. The poet's late remorse of love seems an act of expiation that leads the poet to a new aesthetic discovery. He seems to follow the Victorian poetic technique in equating emotion and geographical place to find the right elegiac note. Ultimately regret acts as a stimulus to his creativity.

Key words: Emma's death, Retentive memory, Regrets, Nostalgia, Pathos, Expiation, New aesthetic discovery, Marital bitterness, Time, Human blindness, Victorian poetic technique, Congruence of emotion

Emma Gifford, Hardy's first wife, died on 27 November 1912. She had aged quickly and had frequently suffered from illnesses which were aggravated by her fear of doctors and refusal to secure professional advice. Poetry for Hardy had been a form of catharsis. He, after Emma's death, began to write a series of poems about his loss. In his own words, it was quite natural; one looked back through the years and saw some pictures.

Hardy and Emma did not visit Cornwall together during their long married life. But within a few months of Emma's death, in March 1913, almost exactly forty three years after their first visit in 1870, he revisited Boscastle and St. Juliot. Standing on the hill-road he remembered how, during their courtship, he and Emma climbed it together. Walking along the Valency Valley, meditation brought about a poem on a picnic during which they had lost a tumbler while Emma was trying to wash it in a little waterfall. His astonishingly retentive memory, wrote Page, took him back to those days in the 1870s as if it had been yesterday, and poem after poem grew out of this pilgrimage. These poems were grouped together with others written before and after the visit to Cornwall and given the title, 'Poems of 1912-13', with an epigraph, from Virgil's *Aeneid*, 'Veteris vestigia flammae', translated either as 'Traces of an old flame' or as 'Relics of an old love'. This profoundly emotional experience happened to Hardy at a moment when he was at the height of his poetic powers. Emma's death was transcended by

the universality of his poignant expression of sorrow. Irving Howe well puts it, 'what begins as an obscure private hurt ends with the common wound of experience' (Howe 183).

The particularly personal nature of the 'Poems of 1912-13' is clear because none of them appeared in periodicals before their first public appearance as a segment of *Satires of Circumstance*, published in November 1914. The group, then, consisted of eighteen poems. The first, 'The Voice', is dated December 1912 and it begins with Emma's death. It is followed by 'Your Last Drive' (also dated December 1912), 'The Walk', 'Rain on a Grave' (31 January 1913), 'I Found Her Out There', 'Without Ceremony', 'Lament', 'The Haunter', 'His Visitor' (1913), and 'A Circular'. All these poems have their location near the Hardy home at Max Gate. Then there is a poem that connects Dorset to Cornwall, 'A Dream or No' (February 1913) by posing such a question, 'why go to Saint – Juliot?' The remaining six poems, 'After Journey', 'A Death-Day Recalled', 'Beeny Cliff', 'At Castle Boterel', 'Places' (Plymouth, March 1913), and 'The Phantom Horsewoman' are also located at the same surroundings. In later editions, 'The Spell of the Rose', 'St Launce's Revisited' and 'Where the Picnic Was' were inserted at the end of the collection.

Taking cue from Carl J. Weber edited *Hardy's Love Poems*, we may say that they are not rhetorical exercises but experiences of far greater extent and variety than recorded in Shakespeare's famous sonnets and in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Weber places the collection of poems besides such celebrated sonnet collections. Hardy, like Mrs. Browning, begins with the magic glow of courtship but whereas Browning's forty-four poems are the result of more or less forty-two weeks, Hardy's are the record of forty-two years. Shakespeare's sonnets testify to his ardent devotion and to his reckless infatuation but they stop short long before the cessation of the poet's breath. Hardy's poems, on the other hand, run the gamut from first sight of the loved one, through courtship, to marriage, to quarrel, to staled familiarity, to disillusion, to bitterness and finally to death and consequently, to self-examination, remorse, expiation and the rebirth of love. At a nutshell, Hardy's poems give us a complete summary of his adult life in a way that neither Shakespeare's nor Mrs. Browning's attempt. What justifies us in making high claims for Hardy's 'Poems of 1912-13' is the intensity, the originality, the tenderness, the poignancy, the delicacy, the wistfulness – in short – the emotional range – that they exhibit. They are never homogenous; they are not the record of the episodes of life. They are life itself.

But the collection is not much known to the general reader. The reasons are nor difficult to fathom. As Weber states, the title of the collection carries no appeal to the readers, particularly one

who is unaware of the significance of the year 1912 or 1913 in Hardy's life. To add, they are tucked into the middle of a collection called *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries* in which the satires with their astringent quality, attracted more attention than the reveries. Moreover, the volume was published in 1914, shortly after the outbreak of a World War during which English readers had other things to do besides reading love poems.

In comparison to Shakespeare's sonnets and Mrs. Browning's, Hardy's lyrics offer much variety, charm and delicacy. They show metrical dexterity and resourcefulness in fitting the techniques of verse to the varied moods of the poet. There are long lines and short lines, there are iambic rhythms and dactylic and anapaestic rhythms. There are ballad stanzas and simple lyrics; there are narratives and 'lament', monosyllabic lines are contrasted with the polysyllabic; dramatic shifts in tempo are managed with the consummate skill of Hardy which was presumably born of his youthful experience in playing the violin. Alliterations and assonance, single rhymes, double and even triple rhymes, are all skilfully handled.

The best of the 'Poems of 1912-13' were recognized from the consequent date of their publication. Laurence Binyon in 1915 described them as 'deeply personal and intense with loss' (*Bookman*, February 1915). Harold Child thought them 'the most musically and suggestively beautiful poems that Hardy ever wrote ... they are intimate, they are personal, they are gentle'. In November 1919, John Middleton Murry, writing in the *Athenaeum*, described the 'Mr. Hardy of the love poems of 1912-13' as 'not a man giving way to memory in poetry, he is a great poet uttering the cry of the universe'.... Arthur McDowell in 1931 thought that they were 'central among the poems ... Almost any one of them, by itself, might take its place among the others, but they cling together with the unity and veracity of a profoundly real experience'.... In 1954, Douglas Brown made comments on Hardy's 'peculiar flair for catching the timbre of the perceived "moment" and for recording a sudden profundity of sensation'. Brown described the poems as 'the summit of Hardy's achievement'. Even F.R. Leavis, who has never been a great admirer of Hardy's works, conceded that 'After a Journey' was 'a poem that we recognize to have come directly out of life, it could ... have been written only by a man who had the experience of a life to remember back through. We recognize the rare quality of a man who can say with that – truth, "I am just the same", and the rare integrity that can so put the truth beyond question. It is a case in which we know from the art what the man was like; we can be same, that is, what personal qualities we should have found to admire in Hardy if we could have known him' (*Scrutiny*, 19).

It is clear that Hardy took upon himself far more of the blame for their troubles than he need have done. Writing to Mrs. Henniker on 17 December, Hardy said,

In spite of the differences between us, which it would be affectation to deny, and certain painful delusions she suffered from all times, my life is intensely sad to me now without her. The saddest moments of all are when I go into the garden and to that long straight walk at the top that you know, where she used to walk every evening just before dusk, the cat trotting faithfully behind her...

(Collected Letters 243)

It was entirely natural that Hardy should make poetry out of his emotions; pain and suffering were a substantial part of his creative impulse, and in that letter can be seen an incident in one of the earliest poems he was to write about Emma's death, 'The Going'.

Why do you make me leave the house

And think for a breath it is you I see

At the end of the alley of bending boughs

Where so often at dusk you used to be;

The poem, 'During Wind and Rain' is built around Emma's Plymouth memories and echoes her remark, 'all has been changed with the oncoming years'. Never having revisited St. Juliot with Emma in all the years of their married life, he now felt impelled to make the journey and 'On March 6 – almost to a day forty three years after his first journey to Cornwall – he started for St Juliot' (*Life* 389). He visited Boscastle, and Pentargon Bay and Beeny Cliff and once again that astonishingly retentive memory brought back vivid recollections of the past, of Emma riding her horse along the cliff, of a drinking-glass lost on a picnic in the Valency river, of Emma waiting for him in her air-blue gown, and many more. In the few months after her death he wrote more poems than he had ever written before in the same space of time. 'Hardy', he tells us, 'was "in flower" in these days' (*Life* 389), and it is ironic that it required Emma's death to bring this about. Believing as he claims to have done that the only form of immortality was that of being remembered by those still alive, he immortalized Emma in these poems, may be as some form of atonement, and he consoled himself in his grief. As William Cowper so nicely

put it, 'He who cannot look forward in comfort must find what comfort he can in looking backward' (Gibson 161-3).

The sequence begins with 'The Going'. Regret, regret, regret - this is the very word that recurs throughout the poem. The poet asks his sweetheart, dead, why she has not given any hint that her term is going to end so soon. She has not given him time either to bid her good-bye or to wish some last tender word. But everything is altered now. This the poet realizes after the dear's death. Significantly such phrases as "darkening darkness" and "yawning blankness" set the perspective. The poet pays encomium on her physical aspect which he will no longer behold even from a distance. He regrets:

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,
Did we not think of those days long dead,
And ere your vanishing strive to seek
That time's renewal?

He accepts his lot with a spirit of resignation to Fate. All is unchangeable. He waits now for his turn.

In 'Your Last Drive', the poet reflects on the last drive of his beloved. Visiting the places by which she drove last, he thinks of the light that perhaps shone on her face. Never perhaps she deemed that she was going to lie there everlastingly after eight days and spoken of "as one who was not".

In 'The Walk', the poet-speaker remembers the past when he walked alone, without her who accompanied him earlier. But he did not miss her then. Now when he walks past the familiar places, alone, he still does not miss her. But he can never dismiss the thought that looms large over the room whereto he has to go after the walk.

In the poem, 'Rain on a Grave', the poet looks at the rain pelting mercilessly on the graveyard of her sweetheart. He repents over the dishonour meted out to her in the past, as is now shown by the whipping rain. He wishes:

Would that I lay there
And she were housed here!
Or, it would have been better if they were subject to the fate!

He conceives the green grass sprouting over her grave and daisies be showing “like stars on the ground”, she being the sweetheart of them, loved beyond measure by those innocent creations “all her life’s round”, there.

In ‘I Found Her Out There’, the speaker says that he has brought her from Lyonesse to lie there, where they stayed, forever. In her noiseless nest, away from life’s commotion, she will never hear the ocean breaking “on the purple strand”. Still, perhaps, the poet imagines, she, underground, might creep to catch the sound of that western sea “as it swells and sobs”, where once she was born and brought up “with the heart of a child”.

Regret continues in the short poem, ‘Without Ceremony’. The poet rues that he has not paid adequate attention to his beloved wife. So, she has passed away unceremoniously, “without a word”, in her “swift style”. Tuning to the elegiac bulk, ‘The Lament’ conveys profound lamentation over the death of the poet’s sweetheart. The poet looks at all those things that used to cause over-joy in her – the parties, the dinners, the Candlemas time. How, with a child’s delight, she used to have them! Now all are stale, cloying him, though, he thinks, it could never have cloyed her.

What is interesting to note in the poem is the way the poet picturises her resting place, the coffin. He calls it “the jailing shell / Of her tiny cell”. She is now shut under grass “where no cups flow”. “In her yew-arched bed” she is dead and gone for “an infinite rest”.

The past haunts the old poet. The poem is conceived from the side of the haunter. She does not want to let him know that she is by him, always. Now she finds him asking so many questions which he did not ask when she was alive. Had he asked then, none of them would have remained unanswered. Now she listens but he cannot hear. Obviously the poem conveys the poet’s regret that he has neglected his wife during her last days.

In the oft-quoted ‘The Voice’, some woman’s call from a distance causes in the poet hallucination about his sweetheart, now dead and gone. He seems to see her as he saw her, waiting for him, “even to the original air-blue gown”. The poet is not sure if she is calling or it is only the breeze, in its listlessness, travelling across the wet valley, she being “ever dissolved in wan wistlessness”. The poem ends on a note of resignation; the poet, faltering forward, still presses on, leaves around him falling, like memory dimming.

Nostalgia recurs in ‘His Visitor’. The speaker says that he has come back from Mellstock to the place where he lived with his sweetheart “for twenty years and more”. In the “re-decked dwelling”, he feels too uneasy to stay and he goes back to Mellstock to “rejoin the roomy silence” and his memory,

“the mute and manifold souls of the old”. The waste of life and spirit as given by the poem is marked in the use of such insignificant words, “the moon wastes weaker”.

In “A Circular”, the poet remembers her who would have hailed all the new fashionable dress. All those garments, up to date, bring back to the poet the memory of his beloved who is now “costumed in a shroud”. Memory besmears the horizon of the poet’s mind. In “A Dream or No”, the poet envisages himself with a maid, his housemate for long years, at Saint-Juliot, a place he has seen in dream. He does not know if ever such a place exists or not, but its dream lingers in his memory with which the image of the maid is inseparably associated.

Pathos rules over the poet in “After a Journey”. The poem is about the journey of the poet to the places haunted by the ghost of his companion, now lost forever. He seems to follow her ghost to all those places, once they visited together. He does not know where she will be in future, since she belongs to a far-off world. But he will come back again to the self-same places where forty years back life was aglow with her.

In ‘A Death-Day Recalled’, the poet gives us the place-names, like Beeny Cliff, St. Juliot, River Vallency, which once she frequented in love. Whether they remember their former friend-it is his query! Often she, he remembers now, pined for the cliff, the church, the river, away from them, confined in town. Now she is gone- away, far away.

‘Beeny Cliff’ induces in the poet sad nostalgia over his beloved, “the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free”. They, then, laughed heartily, enjoying the beauty of the cliff, the bottom being washed by the “wandering western sea”. Still the old Beeny bulks to the sky and the time is again March. Will not she come again? The answer is immediately given. She will not come back because she is elsewhere where she “nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there nevermore”.

As the poet drives to the junction of lane and highway by Castle Boterel, he, looking back at the fading byway, seems to see himself and “a girlish form” climbing the road beside a chaise. It does not matter now, the poet thinks, what they did there and what they talked about. “It filled but a minute”. Still the poet argues that in the hill’s story the moment is engraved forever. Time with its unflinching rigour has ruled out of sight the substance now; a phantom figure is now left. Looking back at the past, amid the rain, the poet apprehends he will never traverse the “old love’s domain” once again because he is nearing his last (“for my sand is sinking”).

'Places' communicates to us the common truth: Death takes away life, the memory of the person who once has been. Nobody says anything. Nobody remembers the girl how she was born and brought up. Nobody says how "she cantered down, as if she must fall".

But there is one, obviously he himself, who remembers her.

To whom to-day is beneaped and stale,

And its urgent clack

But a vapid tale.

In 'The Phantom Horsewoman' the poet images himself as a horse gazing at the 'briny green' whereto his back years bring "a phantom of his own figuring". He carries this vision everywhere he travels; day and night, it stays with him. Time withers him daily but he does not lose the vision of the "ghost-girl-rider" who is unaffected by the march of Time. She still rides on as when first eyed, drawing rein and singing to the swing of the tide.

'The Spell of the Rose' places Emma, or the beloved of the poet's personae, as the speaker there. She has planted a rose bush with a vision that when it would bloom it will cause the cessation of their severance. But untimely she has to go away from the earth. Now, far away from her beloved poet, she reflects if "that queen of trees" now blooms, whom she set but saw not to grow. Perhaps now he can see her by her planted rose-bush but it is "too late to tell" him so.

In the poem, 'St. Launce's Revisited', the poet talks about his revisit of St. Launce and the inn from where he hired horse and man for bearing him towards the door of his desired. It brings back to him his past. Will the tavern still urge him speeding towards the door he once visited by the shore of the Atlantic? It is a rhetorical question and the answer is obviously in the negative. Hope has waned and the poet seems to be wasting away his thoughts since he knows that the dwellers inside the door have vanished "under earth", banished "ever into nought".

Life's irony brings back to his once-familiar places. In 'Where the Picnic Was' he says about his return to the place where they held a picnic last year in the summer time. Climbing back to the place, still he finds the relic of the picnic they had. "A burnt circle", "and stick-ends, charred" and he says, "still strew the sward / Whereon I stand". Two of them have gone back to the urban roar "where no picnics are" and one of the two, his beloved wife, has shut her eyes forever, leaving him alone to reflect on her memory and suffer "evermore".

Edward Neill argues that Hardy works from emotion to fitfully intuited congruence with philosophical concepts (Neill 60-61). But the opposite is also true and it is strategically important in the

combating of false but received ideas about poetic autobiography. The man just writes from life. Testifying to the fact that Hardy's "naked emotion" elegies are controlled by a temporarily situated philosophical mind-set, violated, as it were, by an idea to excellent effect (and affect), we might also cite Philip Davis : "In a book which Hardy read as an introduction to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, James Sully, a disciple of George Eliot, had written of his age : 'We have resolved to measure, the value of the world by human feeling [and] implicit [in this] were [the] assumptions that the world exists for human emotional purpose or it has no purpose ... a romantic legacy which leads to stark pessimism and the conclusion that 'reminiscence is less an endowment than a disease' (Davis 368). Hardy might, as Davis might have suggested, used such ideas as 'regulative concepts', in Kant's idiom, or even an epigraph to the "Emma" poems of 1912-13 even if the "private" emotions seem to leave no room for the "meddling intellect".

Paul Turner in his work on Hardy, comments that 'Poems of 1912-13' is 'the only amends that Hardy could make to his first wife, expressed, like Sergeant Troy's flowers (*Far from the Madding Crowd*), what Byron called "the late remorse of love" (Turner 221-222). In 'The Going' he relived that dreadful morning of 27 November 1912; in 'Your Last Drive', the 'damp dark afternoon' of the 22nd, when 'she motored to pay a visit six miles off', and 'I drove not with you...' In 'The Walk', all the walks he had taken without her, because she was 'weak and lame ... and I did not mind, /Not thinking of you as, left behind'. 'I Found Her Out There' opened a series of poems about their first love-affair at St. Juliot. Others recalled special things about her, her dislike of getting wet and her lifelong love of daisies ('Rain on a Grave'); her habit of abrupt disappearances, like her sudden dash to Calais in 1908 ('Without Ceremony'); her delight in entertaining, especially at Max Gate, garden-parties ('The Lament'); her confident riding ('The Phantom Horsewoman'). But the most powerful expression of Hardy's new feelings about Emma was 'The Voice': 'Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me ...!'

It is worthwhile here to mention what Lytton Strachey suggested about them as well as about the whole bulk of poetry contained in *Satires of Circumstance*. They were, he suggested, modern as no other poems are, simply because they were, common place, prosaic, unmusical, 'incorrect', 'fumbling', 'drab', and 'clumsy' : 'the flat undistinguished poetry of Mr. Hardy has found out the secret of touching our marrow-bones'. (*New Statesman*, 19 December 1914)

Dennis Taylor referred to a particular incident which has a significant bearing to our discussion. (Taylor 22-30)

Hardy paused in front of a tree:

Presently he exclaimed as if to himself: 'How it's grown! I planted that tree when I came here. It was then a small thing not so high as my shoulder'.

He waited a moment as if thinking. Then: 'I suppose that was a long time ago. I brought my first wife here after our honeymoon ... she had long golden hair ... How the tree has grown! But that was in 1876 ... How it has changed ...' He paused, still staring at the tree-then remarked: Time changes everything except something within us which is always surprised by change'.

For Hardy, realisation came when a sudden shock exposed the sharp gap between present reality and the past image. The shock comes and his consciousness is flooded. The cruel law is revealed – that we know the state of reality best when that reality has ceased to exist. The full import of his life comes when '[a]ll's past amend,/Unchangeable. It must go'.

The poems seem to come out of his life in a way that Hardy called 'inevitable', as the belated clarification of an experience in which his very identity was involved. They were 'expiation', as Hardy called them, rather than an indulgence. 'The verses came; it was quite natural; one looked through the years and saw some pictures; a loss like that just makes one's old brain vocal!' (Hardy's comment on 2 November 1913).

As a series, 'Poems of 1912-13' shows Hardy gradually realising the implications of his new aesthetic discovery. The sequence of poems corresponds to the growing stages of Hardy's awareness between December 1912 and April 1913. The arrangement of the poems shows that Hardy's first reaction to Emma's death was a shock that reverberated through every level of his emotional and intellectual life. The shock was followed by a variety of desperate reactions: the desire to blame himself, the desire to blame her, the desire to recapture the past and live it over, the terrible confusion that human beings can waste such happiness, the terrible despair. Such variety of reactions eventually gives way to a more persistent theme: an increased fascination with the early image of their love. The image grows in intensity and binds the mind once again. As it grows in intensity, its phantom character becomes clearer, until the great poetic breakthrough occurs. The mental process through which he was passing was actually a process undergone inside him for the last forty years. The final vision tends to transcend the bitterness and recriminations though their echoes are still heard. But the tragedy of marital bitterness has been placed in the larger perspective of time and human blindness.

Brian Green seems to catch the very essence of the process of composition of this segment of *Satires of Circumstance* (192-213). He refers to

Hardy's domestic elegy, comprising poems of deep, personal sorrow – but sorrow as merely one of several states and impulses in a whole process of human grieving and the achieving of consolation. This mourning process is dramatically presented as the operation of a bereaved husband's mind. Accordingly, since Hardy's elegy is a dramatic poem of loss and consolation, of reflection and celebration, having affinities with Victorian elegiac feeling, we find that he likewise adopts the Victorian poetic technique of (in Bernard Richards's words) 'exploit[ing] the congruence of emotion and geographical place'.(Green 192-213)

Green argues that in 'Poems of 1912-13' Hardy combines all three uses of spatial imagery; but what distinguishes the elegiac sequence is Hardy's structural use of spatial imagery. The spatial images provide the concrete components of this structure, so that by explicating the psychological structure within the elegiac sequence, by following the contour of the bereaved husband's various states and movements of mind as symbolised in places, objects and spatial details – in a blanketing pattern of tensions between images of enclosure, extension and dimension – we can catch the right elegiac note and so define the especial achievement of 'Poems of 1912-13'.

Laurence Lerner has an important article to be included in Charls P.C. Pettit edited book on Hardy (Pettit 22-38). Lerner dissociates the biographer in him from the poems and proposes to look at the poems as *poems*, to ask what they are conveying and how they convey it. How Hardy behaved and felt, he says, over his wife's death is not an easy matter for the biographers. He thinks that how Hardy behaved in real life is not the subject of the poems, which draw on autobiographical material, not to give clues to the biographers, but to make art out of life, to create a world in which the truest poetry is the most feigning.

Hardy was plunged with equal suddenness into depths of remorse and regret. Precisely for that reason, the event provided – as the 'Poems of 1912-13' so eloquently show – an immense and wholly unexpected stimulus to his creativity at a time when it might otherwise have been threatened by advancing age, by the profoundly depressive experience of living through the First World War, and by the continuation of domestic unhappiness.

Works Cited

- Davis, Philip. *Memory and Writing: From Wordsworth to Lawrence*. Liverpool. Liverpool University Press, 1983. Print.
- Gibson, James. *Thomas Hardy : A Literary Life*. London : Macmillan, 1996. Print.
- Green, Brian. *Hardy's Lyrics : Pearls of Pity*. London : Macmillan, 1996. Print.
- Howe, Irving. *Thomas Hardy*. New York : Mackmillan, 1967. Print.
- Millgate, Michael, ed. *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1982. Print.
- Neill, Edward. *Trial by Ordeal : Thomas Hardy and the Critics*. Columbia : Camden House, 1999. Print.
- Page, Norman, ed. *Oxford Reader's Companion to Hardy*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Pettit, Charles P.C. ed. *Celebrating Thomas Hardy*. London : Macmillan, 1996. Print.
- Purdy, R.L. and Michael Millgate eds. *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy* : Oxford : Clarendon, 1970. Print.
- Taylor, Dennis. *Hardy's Poetry 1860-1928*. London: Macmillan, 1981. Print.
- Turner, Paul. *The Life of Thomas Hardy. A Critical Biography*. Oxford : Blackwell, 1988. Print.
- Weber, Carl J., ed. *Thomas Hardy : Love Poems*. London : Macmillan, 1963. Print.

Playboy and Patriarchy: Representations of authority and Resistance in J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*

Bidisha Mukherjee

Abstract: Right from its opening in 1907, J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* has been one of the most controversial productions of the Abbey. But the hostile reception of the play that attributed to Synge a slanderous portrayal of the Irishmen as being unfit for self-rule overlooked the antipatriarchal message found in the play's structure.

Etymologically, the term 'patriarchy' is associated with rule, authority, power, domination, tyranny. *The Playboy* introduces two fathers- Old Mahon and Father Reilly- one belonging to the secular world of the Irish peasantry, and the other, to the spiritual world, and displaces them from their high pedestal. The influence of the spiritual father is cut short by eliminating his physical presence from the play. *The Playboy* exposes the hypocrisy of these people, and, therefore, indulges in a criticism and ultimately a rejection of Irish priests and their power. The killing of the secular father by his son reverses the Biblical roles of father and son and thus opposes the imposed authority of Christianity upon the heathen Irish folk. All these are attained through the character of the son, Christy Mahon. My objective in this paper is to show how Synge conveys his antipatriarchal message by presenting Christy as an individual revolutionary opposing these father figures.

Keywords: Synge, Antipatriarchy, Authority, Father, Son, Church, State, Patricide, Pagan, Christianity

Right from its opening on 26 January, 1907, J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* has been one of the most controversial productions of the Abbey. Immediately after its first performance, Lady Gregory wired to Yeats, "Audience broke up in disorder at the word shift" (112) which explained amply how much Synge's unflattering portrayal of Irish peasant life in place of an affirming depiction of nationalist folk culture had outraged an audience that believed in a melodramatic and hypersentimental ideology of nationalism and the virtue of 'everything Irish'. But this hostile reception that attributed to Synge a slanderous portrayal of the Irish as being unfit for self-rule overlooked the anti-patriarchal message found in the play's structure.

Etymologically, the term 'patriarchy'¹ is associated with rule, authority, power, domination, tyranny. No wonder a play produced in Ireland at a time when two principal constructions of authority and power (the church and the state) were joining hands to perpetuate colonial exploitation against demands of Home Rule would concentrate on different forms and representations of authority. And *The Playboy* does this by introducing two fathers- Old Mahon and Father Reilly- one belonging to the secular world of the Irish peasantry, and the other, to the spiritual world. The play begins with these fathers at their supreme power. When it ends, they are dispossessed of their power. And this is attained through the character of the son, Christy Mahon. This paper attempts to show how Synge conveys his antipatriarchal message by presenting Christy as an individual revolutionary opposing these father figures who in turn are agents of authority.

Declan Kiberd, in *Inventing Ireland*, argues that "Father Reilly is so peripheral a figure to these fundamentally pagan people [the Mayoites] that Synge does not allow him to appear on the stage at all" (166). Actually, the priest's off-stage presence provides Synge the means to criticise the church's pervasive authority over the 'blind faith' of the Irish folk, represented here through another son, Shawn Keogh.

The influence of the spiritual father is cut short by eliminating his physical presence from the play. No one pays any heed to his rules and regulations except the timid, father-fearing (instead of God-loving) Shawn Keogh who is nothing but a caricature of a true disciple. A well-to-do peasant who is engaged to Pegeen Mike, the central female character in the play, Shawn is directed only by his fear of and need to please Father Reilly, following his fanaticism and rigid domination to the extent where he can no longer distinguish his own judgements of right and

wrong. When Pegeen and her father beg Shawn to stay so that she will not be alone at night, Shawn claims, “I would and welcome, Michael James, but I’m afeared of Father Reilly” (72). Despite his knowledge that he should try to protect Pegeen, he cannot defy Father Reilly. His submissiveness to the priest’s authority, along with his preference for his own bed rather than the drunken wake for Kate Cassidy, suggests that he is the product of the ‘devotional revolution’² which, inspired by Cardinal Paul Cullen, sought to replace semi-Pagan practices, such as wakes, with standardised, Church-approved alternatives. Very skilfully, Synge attaches a religious initiative like the devotional revolution with a weakling like Shawn Keogh with the sole purpose of showing how some initiatives undertaken by the church failed in Ireland. Shawn tries to project his fears onto the other characters, calling on a universal fear of Christianity and its priests. He cries to Michael, “Leave me go, Michael James, leave me go, you old Pagan, leave me go or I’ll get the curse of the priests on you and of the scarlet-coated bishops of the courts of Rome” (73). While Shawn intends ‘Pagan’ as an insult on Michael James, the latter prefers Pegeen’s marriage to Christy instead of Shawn, by saying, “I’m a decent man of Ireland, and I liefer face the grave untimely and I seeing a score of grandsons growing up little gallant swearers by the name of God, than go peopling my bedside with puny weeds the like of what you’d [Pegeen] breed. . . out of Shaneen Keogh. . .” (115). His description of Pegeen as a ‘heathen daughter’ and her rejection of Shawn as a man ‘with no savagery’, captures the profound level of the Irish folk life at which the unrestrained expression of passion in the pursuit, or defence, of the fully realised self is a virtue, albeit now but a flickering remnant of a reality driven to the verge of extinction through commerce and conformity. *The Playboy* thus evokes an antipatriarchal spirit among the Irish folk which can drive them to oppose the conformity to the church and the priests.

The Irish society has been frequently cited as one of the most religious societies in Europe. In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, it witnessed a violent turmoil as it was pulled between submission to Catholicism and the British Empire and loyalties to its own cultural heritage and Celtic descent. In the wake of the Potato Famine of 1846, a society, whose Catholic nature had become synonymous with its national identity, began to question the role of the Catholic Church for, by that time, the Church had begun flourishing by reaping the financial benefits without giving any allowance to the lower class that was struggling to survive through the famine. On the other hand were the debates regarding the death of the political leader Charles

Stewart Parnell³, Ireland's 'uncrowned king', and the battles for Home Rule that began to question the role of the church.

When Synge was entering into a creative life, the churches were involved not only in influencing and directing the social and moral lives of the Irish folks, but also in providing leadership in the political arena. To maintain middle class status and the wealth of the church, the clergy's interests became more political than spiritual. Synge recognised the hypocrisy that existed in this God-fearing people, and therefore, *The Playboy* indulges in a criticism and ultimately a rejection of Irish priests and their power. Many scholars claim that his intense religious education under his Protestant mother led Synge to an anti-Christian sentiment aimed mostly at Catholics. Greene and Stephens, in their book *J. M. Synge: 1871-1909*, argue that Synge's sentiment was not of a rejection of Catholicism but a rejection of the strict doctrines of religion taught by his mother. They quote Synge's own words, "By the time I was sixteen or seventeen I had renounced Christianity. . . . I felt a sort of shame in being thought an infidel, a term which I have always- and still- used as a reproach" (9).

This non-conformity to religious authority is reflected in the nature of the Mayoites who are as 'wild' as the coast of the play's setting. The villagers are violent, drunk, and vulgar. They flaunt their disobedience of Christian decorum with their discussions of drinking and violence, harassing and dismissing Shawn- the representative of Father Reilly. Like Father Reilly himself, his influence seems absent at best. The villagers usurp Christian restrictions on language, just as Synge himself did by using the word 'shift' in the play. They express passionate language to express emotion. The only attempt of interference made by Father Reilly in trying to remove Christy from Pegeen's house is neutralized as he employs Widow Quin for the job instead of going himself because he and Shawn are afraid of a criminal like Christy. Widow Quin, on her first entrance, remarks to Pegeen: "I'm after meeting Shawn Keogh and Father Reilly below, who told me of your curiosity man, and they fearing by this time he was maybe roaring, romping on your hands with drink" (83). Not surprisingly, they send a hardened woman to do what these weak men will not do themselves.

To resist the advance of deculturalization through spiritual imperialism, the villagers revert back to primitive attitudes and begin to appreciate everything uncivilized and non-Christian. Therefore, Pegeen and the villagers revere Christy's act of patricide, exclaiming, "Oh

glory be to God!” (77). This exclamation to God and His mercy for Christy’s act demonstrates their own desire to destroy the ‘father’ who restrains them. In Bretherton’s opinion, the ‘carnival madness’ (324) of the villagers of Mayo is a release from the heavy hands of English law, the magistrate and police that lurk in the background. Through Christy as the ‘carnival king’⁴, the Mayoites fulfil their inherent desire to challenge the hierarchy.

While the spiritual father is dispossessed of his control over the community, the actual father has also been dismissed of his role. Old Mahon’s attempt to force Christy into marriage with the widow Casey has mercenary ends; Old Mahon would then ‘have her gold to drink’. Father Reilly’s power over Shawn is no less complete for being driven by devotion, for what these two ‘fathers’ look to achieve is the removal of autonomous free choice from their various offspring. While Old Mahon represents the secular fathers who used land ownerships as a means to cow their sons, Father Reilly becomes an embodiment of the religious fathers who used spiritual ownership to keep their disciples ‘afear’d’. However the difference between Shawn and Christy is in the extent to which each resists incorporation within the patriarchal power-structure and it is the basis of that resistance, and its implications for the individual and society, which is Synge’s major interest. Christy’s metamorphosis- his change from a shuttering lout to the ‘master of all future fights’- contrasts with Shawn’s continued submission. At the beginning, Christy and Shawn are equals, despite Christy’s fear of having killed his ‘da’. By the time of the final curtain, one man has changed, and the other has not. The implication of that change, that tyrannical authority can and should be overthrown, is at the heart of the play.

In making an Irish community glamorise a man who is reputed to have killed his father, Synge has undertaken a stance which, as Ben Levitas claims, is ‘prototypically avant-gardist’ (471). In a draft letter to Stephen Mackenna in January 1904, Synge wrote, “I think the Law-Maker and Law-Breaker are both needful in society- as the lively and volcanic forces are needed to make earth’s crust inhabitable. . . .” (Saddlemyer I: 76). Like Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, Synge too is ruthless in showing the faults within his own culture that prompted and perpetuated colonial domination. The moral hypocrisy of the common Irish people who readily accepted the authority of the Church and yet spoke of nationalism is clearly exposed through the shifting reaction of the Mayoites to Christy’s patricide. When the murder was only a ‘gallous story’ far removed from reality they were worshipping Christy, but when they experience it for

real, they turn away from Christy calling the murder a 'dirty deed'. In order to neutralize the hypocrisy of the law-abiding Father-fearing people of Ireland, a law-breaker like Christy is needed- he is the necessary evil needed to purge the society of its guilt. The son sacrificing the father instead of the father sacrificing the son⁵ is a reversal of roles: this enables Synge, on the religious level, to subvert the power of God, the Father by establishing Christy, the son, as the authority. This transformation is revealed in Christy's command to his father when Old Mahon asks Christy to come with him: "Go with you, is it? I will then, like a gallant captain with his heathen slave. Go on now and I'll see you from this day stewing my oatmeal and washing my spuds, for I'm master of all fights from now, (Pushing Mahon.) Go on, I'm saying" (120). Through Christy Mahon, Synge challenges the authority of the Christian God as dominating and patriarchal and speaks for a revival of a paganised set of beliefs to usher in a cultural revival of which the protagonist is the symbol. In Christy, Synge portrays a parody of Christ, the Son. Hugh H. MacLean, in his article "The Hero as Playboy", points out that the scene in Act II where the girls bring gifts to visit Christy can be seen as a parallel of the gifts brought by the Magi to visit Christ (14). This, coupled with the epiphanic moment of Christy's self realisation and the betrayal by the Mayoites, effectively parody the life of Christ who was sacrificed by God to save the world. Quite at tune with this idea, Sara, while in conversation with Widow Quin, says, "I'll bet my dowry that he'll lick [not save] the world" (89). Synge thus presents in Christy a "Christ-destroyer" (Pearce 96) to show the inapplicability of the myth of Christ, the Saviour, in a context where the representatives of God, the priests themselves, are engaged in destroying the country. Christy is the 'mock Christ' (Bretherton 323) for he not only breaks away from the tradition of mythologizing a religious past but also shows that what Ireland needs is not a Messianic deliverer with religious preaching but a true leader who can defy conformity to patriarchal domination and liberate his native land from the thrall of priestcraft, Catholic dogmas, and colonial exploitation.

Christy's depiction as a political leader is illustrated further by his identification with Parnell. Like Parnell, Christy is also betrayed by the folk in whom he believes when he commits patricide for the second time. The great gap between a 'gallous story' and a 'dirty deed' breaks their illusion and turns the villagers away from Christy and renew their fear of the church and the state for which patricide is a taboo. Their attempt to punish Christy in favour of a vigilante justice reflects Synge's distaste for the Irishmen's mediocrity and their liminal existence between

heathenism and Christianity, autonomy and submission that led their battles for independence to utter failure. Only Christy remains an outstanding individual- an exemplary figure of the artist-tormented by hypocrisy and middle class morality.

The Playboy, in its attempt to initiate Ireland's cultural revival, does not idealize Irish culture and heritage to an absurd degree of sentimental patriotism that may defy any healthy criticism as treacherous or anti-national. The play, in fact, is an analysis of a dying culture both in its Gaelic and Anglo-Irish forms. Synge's acrid comic vision of the fading Irish culture is close to that of Joyce in *Dubliners* and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In striking down his father for the second time Christy frees himself from the past and starts out on his journey of liberation into a future where he and his father can 'go on' together. The gestures of freedom are made at the expense of the community, because they are not possible in and through it. The process by which the community, and especially Pegeen, enabled Christy to become the playboy is one of complementary wish- fulfilment and self-realization; he is the 'heroic past made flesh'. But when it faces them in all its bloody reality they make the choice of mediocrity over magnificence. And Pegeen loses her playboy of the western world because he has achieved a fullness the society can neither contain nor any longer find entertaining. *The Playboy* thus is a story of Christy's maturation through struggle and protest which is not attainable to the Mayoites. Therefore, Shawn remains unchanged, forever in Father Reilly's power. He fails because submission to authority is not the acceptable way for Ireland. Christy triumphs in the end because he dares to resist and defy the father(s). He can dream and do the 'dirty deed' to make his dreams come true.

Christy's ability to usurp the Christian patriarchal domination allows him to fulfil the role of what Yeats would call 'the new priest'⁶. And it is because of their rejection of this 'new priest' and reverting back to the papal power that the Mayoites are damned to "go on living without dreams" (Krause 43). This damnation is recognized only by Pegeen as she now comes down from her idealistic pedestal to the plane of reality where she is left with no other option than to marry Shawn. She therefore laments, "Oh my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only Playboy of the Western World" (121).

Christy's attempted patricide that symbolizes his resistance to totalitarian authority and dominative exploitation of hierarchical power-structures is a rarity that, Synge is convinced, is

hard to find in the common Irish lot. For Synge, the Irish people who had gone through the devastating Famine, the imperial exploitations, the cultural erosion and still endured religious domination hardly had the capability of defining their selves as Christy does. Christy's celebratory exit at the end determines his redemption from the patriarchal structure to which the villagers are subjected. Through Christy, the son, Synge unmakes the patriarchal structure and establishes the authority of the creative self as a means of Irish cultural revival because no other form of authority – religious or political- is deemed worthy of respect. *The Playboy*, in making Christy, the son, the embodiment of liberation and a symbol of Irish cultural nationalism, resists the tyranny of the 'fathers'.

Notes:

1. Patriarchy is a social system in which males are the primary authority figures central to social organization, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property, and where fathers hold authority over women and children.
2. A movement initiated by Cardinal Paul Cullen in twentieth century Ireland that was aimed at making the kind of modern Irish Catholicism that lasted from this day until the end of the twentieth century- pietistic, puritan, priest-ridden. It included the introduction of 'Benediction' and such other devotions; and rejected any traditional conformity to local saints, patterns, holy wells, wakes and the like as superstitious and uncouth.
3. Charles Stewart Parnell (27 June 1846 – 6 October 1891) was an Irish landlord, [nationalist political leader](#), [land reform](#) agitator, and the founder and leader of the [Irish Parliamentary Party](#). He was one of the most important figures in 19th century [Great Britain and Ireland](#), and was described by [Prime Minister William Gladstone](#) as the most remarkable person he had ever met. Parnell led the Irish Parliamentary Party as Member of Parliament (MP) through the period of Parliamentary nationalism in Ireland between 1875 and his death in 1891.
4. In Bretherton's opinion, the way in which Christy is appreciated by the Mayoites and is, at first, raised to the height of almost a king through competitions and races and, ultimately, dispossessed of that pedestal can be compared with the making and unmaking of a make-believe king in a carnival.

5. Synge here deconstructs the Biblical myth that God has sacrificed his only son to save the world ["For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (*John 3: 16*)].
6. A term used by W. B. Yeats. Instead of promoting religious nationalism, Yeats advocated intellectual nationalism in the struggle against imperialist policies in Ireland and spoke for replacing the priests with artists, addressing them as 'new priests'.
- 7.

Works Cited

- Bretherton, George. "A Carnival Christy and a Playboy for All Ages." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 37.3 (Autumn 1991): 322-34. Print.
- Greene, David H., and Edward M. Stephens. *J. M. Synge: 1871-1909*. New York: MacMillan, 1959. Print.
- Gregory, Lady Augusta. *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1965. Print.
- Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996. Print.
- Krause, David. *The Profane Book of Irish Comedy*. Ithaca: Cornell U, 1982. Print.
- Levitas, Ben. "The Playboy of the Western World". *Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama: Background and Criticism*. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009. 468-472. Print.
- MacLean, Hugh H., "The Hero as Playboy". *UKCR* 21.1 (1954): 9-19. Print.
- Pearce, Howard D., "Synge's Playboy as a Mock-Christ". *Modern Drama*. 8.3(1965):303-310. *Project MUSE*. Web. 4 Jul. 2013.

Saddlemyer, Anne, ed. *The Collected Letters of J. M. Synge*. New York: Oxford UP, 1983.

Print.

Synge, J. M. *The Complete Works of J. M. Synge*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.,

2008. Print. (All textual quotations in this paper are from this edition)

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: An Apocalyptic Voyage of Self-discovery through Psychic Explorations

Samit Kr. Maiti

Abstract: Though mainstream critical tradition holds Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) as a powerful indictment of the European colonialism in Africa under Leopold II, it is undeniable that the novella is an interesting literary and artistic document that offers a scope for interpreting it as a psychic exploration of the narrator, Marlow, through which he achieves a sort of metaphysical knowledge of apocalyptic nature. The plot of the novel constitutes Marlow's recapitulation of an earlier experience of expedition into the 'heart of darkness', the innermost regions of the African Congo, a victim of ruthless colonial exploitation in 19th century by Brussels, the capital of Belgium. The title of the novel is highly symbolic; it refers to the physical, metaphysical, psychological, moral 'darkness'. Marlow's physical voyage into the darkest regions of Africa along the river Congo is symbolic of his journey into the psychological space of the unconscious self. The experience of Marlow's confrontation with that 'darkness' is horrific, leading him towards the realization of the truth of epiphanic nature.

The paper attempts to show, through an analysis of the textual and extra-textual materials, how Marlow's confrontation with the experiences of 'the heart of darkness' of the African Congo becomes ultimately symbolic of the exploration of the deepest recess of the human mind, the unconscious self; and how this experience unveils the blatant truth of the naked reality that lies beneath the veneer of 'brotherhood' and 'philanthropy' of the Western civilization.

Keywords: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, unconscious, self-realization.

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), first appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, employs Marlow as the self-deprecating, reflective and self-conscious narrator who recapitulates an earlier experience of an expedition from Brussels to the heart of Congo, while waiting in a cruising yawl, *Nellie*, on the river Thames. Marlow is a fictionalized representation of Conrad's own self, and Marlow's recapitulation of the previous experience that constitutes the kernel of the framed narrative is partly autobiographical. But Conrad succeeds in maintaining a critical distance from his narrator, as Maria Couto observes: "His role as narrator enables Conrad to explore moral and existential dimensions, to express his deepest insights and fears without recourse to third person narrative and the omniscient voice" (xli). Marlow's memorization of the adventures along the Congo into the darkest regions of the African continent, that is otherwise known as the 'Dark Continent', is an allegorical exploration of innermost recess of the human mind, the unconscious self or the 'Freudian Id' or the 'Jungian shadow'.

While tracing out the special characteristics of the system of the 'unconscious', Freud opines that "unconscious processes can only be observed by us under the conditions of dreaming..." (Baines 436). Conrad's use of impressionistic technique and symbolism make the novel the most profound and complex tale. The novel "begins at nightfall, proceeds through shadow, night, fog and dense jungle into a further darkness Marlow seeks to understand" (Couto xlvi). Even Albert J Guerard, in his article "The Journey Within", argues that "The true night journey can occur only in sleep or in the waking dream of a profoundly intuitive mind. Marlow insists more than is necessary on the dreamlike quality of his narrative" (245). Marlow recounts the tale by sitting in the posture of the 'meditative' Buddha. More than once, he emphasizes that the act of recapitulation of that experience takes place in a dreamlike situation:

It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream — making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is the very essence of dreams... (Conrad 44).

Memorization of the previous horrendous experience is symbolic of the journey to some primeval or pre-historic place along the channel of the great river Congo: "Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (55). The experience was menacing: "The smell of mud, of primeval mud, by Jove! was in my nostrils, the high stillness of primeval forest was before my eyes..." (43). Throughout the novel Conrad depicts the natural

vegetations of the African forest by his superb mastery of the impressionistic method, which creates a sense of mysterious haziness.

Unconscious chiefly consists of vulgar emotions and primal irrational instincts, as Freud asserts in the section entitled "Special Characteristics of the System Unconscious":

The kernel of the system Unconscious consists of instincts-presentations whose aim is to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, they are wish impulses. These instinctual impulses are coordinate with one another, exist independently side by side, and are exempt from mutual contradiction. When two wishes whose aim must appear to us incompatible become simultaneously active, the two impulses do not detract one from the other or cancel each other, but combine to form an intermediate aim, a compromise (Baines 436).

The emotions which are basically wild, immoral, vulgar and unsocial constitute the primary ingredients of the unconscious; because those emotions are not permitted for manifestation by the pre-conscious, hence they are stored up in the unconscious as a by-product of regression.

The novella begins with Marlow's reference to the Roman invaders in Britain. Marlow believes that the colonizers are morally depraved because of their isolation from the norms of civilization. They turn to the lawless jungle to fulfil their abominable pleasure-principles and irrational impulses:

Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some island post feel the savagery, the utter savagery...all the mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men...He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination – you know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate (Conrad 8).

Marlow emphasizes again and again that his trip upriver into the geographical heart of ethnographically darkest Africa represents a voyage through the dark backward and abysm of time into the inner heart of darkness, "the utterly savage of being that existed before civilization tamed the unconscious with its absolute desire for egotistic self-fulfilment by means of moral restraints" (Singh 270):

Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest...There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it

came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect (Conrad 55-56).

Thus for Marlow Africa becomes the symbol of the primitive, remote, unknown, mysterious and savage force. The novella is resonant with the impressionistic images of 'darkness', 'stillness', 'inscrutability', 'primitiveness' and 'wilderness'. Furthermore, Marlow uses the words like 'brutal', 'evil', 'accursed', 'monstrous', 'vengeful', 'implacable' and 'pitiless' so frequently while describing Africa and its people that they conveniently help to create a sense of collective evil or homogeneity of irrational emotions that, according to Freud, constitutes one of the fundamental characteristic aspects of the unconscious.

The processes of unconscious are independent of the temporal flow of time, as Freud argues: "The processes of the system of Unconscious are timeless; i.e., they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time, in fact bear no relation to time at all" (Baines 436). While reflecting on the validity and truthfulness of his experience, Marlow also asserts the timelessness of his story: "The mind of man is capable of anything — because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage — who can tell? — but truth — truth stripped of its cloak of time (Conrad 60). It is true that the plot of the novella maintains a temporal order of time and place — London, a yawl on the Thames, the dusk — and it also maintains the chronological order of the voyage — the trading company, The Company Station, the overland journey, the Central Station, the Inner Station and finally meeting with Kurtz. But these orders of time and space symbolically refer to some other "spaces, alternative and unknowable orders of time" (Couto xli); the geographical space refers to the "psychological topography" and the chronological time refers to "psychological time". This symbolic dualism is established by Conrad at the very start of the novella when he places Marlow within the ambivalent structure of his frame narrative:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine (Conrad 7).

Thus the psychological symbolism of the narrative is established by Conrad from the very beginning of the story.

Freudian theory of the unconscious argues that the personality of a man is fundamentally shaped by the libidinal instincts of the Unconscious. Keeping this conviction in mind it can fairly

be asserted that the 'heart of darkness' may refer to "a psychological space of the unconscious self, which Marlow, on a journey of psycho-sexual initiation, comes glimpsingly to perceive" (Fothergill 5). Therefore Marlow's journey is the journey into the sexual traumas of the unconscious. Towards the beginning of the story, as Marlow recounts his boyhood dreams, he tells to the crew on the yawl that he had a fascination for maps and lust for adventure:

Now when I was little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration...But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird — a silly little bird (Conrad 10-11).

The images of snake and bird, the traditional phallic symbols, introduce the motif of sexual encounter. Robert Kimbrough's arguments regarding the symbolic connotation of the river and the natural objects are pertinent here:

Thus the river is a phallus within the vulva of Africa, the head of the penis touching the womb, the heart, the inner darkness. But the river itself is a vulva, open to the sea, inviting the sexually excited scavenger birds of Europe. The snake swallowing its own tail is the sign of fulfilment, of perfection, of androgynous wholeness because penis and vulva engaged can create a continuous circle. But in *Heart of Darkness* the phallus of Europe enters the orifice, moves inward to the heart of darkness, reaches climax, and is disgorged. Phallic futility, vaginal pain — no fulfilment, no contentment (411).

The description of Marlow's up-river journey as "penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness" (Conrad 58) may be read as a reproduction of an experience that is utterly sensual. However, Marlow's irresistible fascination for river Congo on the map and the dark and mysterious African continent are symbolic of man's irresistible compulsion for the fulfilment of libidinal instincts.

Kurtz's inordinate passion for the African native woman represents a metaphorical encounter of the two opposite cultures. Kurtz is a perfect embodiment of Europe — civilised, masculine, literate — whereas the Native Woman is Africa — dangerous, wild, timeless, feminine, deeply religious and vibrant. Kurtz's love for the native woman is "fascination of abomination". Conrad introduces the native African woman as a mysterious woman, embodying the very primitive wilderness:

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed clothes, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments...She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent: there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul (102-3).

Kurtz's relationship with the native African woman can be described as "a fine example of the phallic futility of a relationship which has none of the creativity and bonding of love, only love's hate and anger. Kurtz's lustful exploitation of the woman, then, is rape, just as were his raids in the lake region, just as was the fantastic invasion of Africa by Christian...(Kimbrough 411). For Kurtz then this fascination for the native woman is his symbolic confrontation with the potentially fallen self of the unconscious.

However, Marlow's recounting of the journey to the crew is a spiritual voyage of self-discovery. He remarks crucially that he did not know himself fully before setting out that journey. The Inner Station was "the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me — and into my thoughts" (Conrad 10). Indeed, for Marlow, this recapitulation has been a mode of self-discovery; but the greatest and most horrific self-discovery is made by Kurtz, 'the European genius'. When Kurtz says "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad 118) rhetoric and reality come together, Europe and Africa collide, the Intended and the African. Kurtz comes to acknowledge that the unleashing of the monstrous passions in the African wilderness has been a horrific sham:

Kurtz realizes that all he has been nurtured to believe in, to operate from, is a sham; hence, a horror. And, the primal nature of nature is also, to him, a horror, because he has been stripped of his own culture and stands both literally and figuratively naked before another; he has been exposed to desire but cannot comprehend it through some established, ready-at-hand, frame of reference (Kimbrough 414).

Kurtz can never go back to his Intended because of his full experience of self and sexual knowledge - the agony of his realization informs his doubled expression of "horror".

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a psychological narrative that unearths the hollowness of the European moral principles of 'universal brotherhood' and 'philanthropy' as well as the savage politics: "*Heart of Darkness* invents for itself a genre of psychological narrative, it discovers a standpoint from which to contest grotesque political abuse... *Heart of Darkness* challenges the

structure of institutions with the structure of the mind" (Levenson 401). The unredeemable horror in the story is the duplicity, cruelty, and venality of European officialdom. The novella pursues the representation of bureaucracy until it becomes the representation of a monstrous passion. So to appreciate the tale as a psychological fiction is to appreciate the way it must excavate a place for the mind.

Works Cited

Baines, Cecil M. "The Unconscious". Benton, William (ed.). *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud*. The University of Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1974. Print.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. With an Introduction and Notes by Maria Couto. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Fothergill, Anthony. *Heart of Darkness*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2003. Print.

Guerard, Albert J. "The Journey Within". A Norton Critical Edition, *Heart of Darkness*. Third Edition. Robert Kimbrough (ed.). Delhi: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002. Print.

Kimbrough, Robert. "Conrad's *Youth* (1902): An Introduction". A Norton Critical Edition, *Heart of Darkness*. Third Edition. Robert Kimbrough (ed.). Delhi: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002. Print.

Levenson, Michael. "The Values of Facts in the *Heart of Darkness*". A Norton Critical Edition, *Heart of Darkness*. Third Edition. Robert Kimbrough (ed.). Delhi: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002. Print.

Singh, Frances B. "The Colonialistic Bias of *Heart of Darkness*". A Norton Critical Edition, *Heart of Darkness*. Third Edition. Robert Kimbrough (edt.). Delhi: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002. Print.

The Inseparable Shadow: Depiction of Death in Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” and “The Fly”

Maitrayee Misra

Abstract: In Modern British fiction – both novels and short stories – the theme of death has been represented quite seriously. Historical events like the two World Wars and large scale political turmoil in different parts of the world have contributed substantially to the development of a new attitude of depicting the issue of death in fiction. How the death of a particular individual casts a traumatic spell over a lot many people and affects the lives of people outside the family, has been treated more psychologically than ever in British fiction. Short story as the youngest literary genre, in the first quarter of twentieth century, unmistakably notices the terror and trauma of the World Wars. These traits are evident in Katherine Mansfield’s short stories. My paper concentrates on her two short stories (*The Garden Party* and *The Fly*), and attempts to show how the issue of one’s death affects the lives of people around and how like life death is inseparable.

Key-words: Trauma, Psychological crisis, Memory, Consciousness of death.

“To be alive and to be a ‘writer’ is enough ... There is nothing like it!”

Katherine Mansfield

From time immemorial, one of the basic aspects of literature is to impose a meaning to both life and death. Mortality, impermanence and fragility of human life, loss and bereavement – all center round the theme of death in literature through the ages. The purpose of this paper is not to investigate the presentation of the theme of death in English Literature in different ages, but to focus on the depiction of death in the early-modern post-war British fiction with particular reference to Katherine Mansfield’s two short stories – *The Garden Party* and *The Fly*. At the onset of modernism, after the First World War, the establishment of psychological theories, made literature inclined towards various psychological traits. As a result, the events of mourning no

longer restricted itself to the feelings of loss only, but started to emerge with psychological significance.

In the vast arena of English prose (fiction), Katherine Mansfield remains ablaze as one of the unique stylists. She carried within her every possibility to heighten the art of short story to the utmost level of perfection. Her profundity in observation enabled her to gather the minute details and happenings of everyday life and to project all those as “something greater than life itself” (Nagenknocht 273). Still it was very difficult for her to compete with all the prominent Bloomsburians, who did not pay serious heed to her writings. In spite of judging her skills and unique techniques they were eager to focus on the size, which is very pathetic. Strachey says “[s]he wrote some rather – in fact – distinctly – bright storyettes...” (82). Regarding the brevity of her stories, T.S. Eliot stressed that she “handled perfectly the minimum material...” (38).

Although being a highly criticized and a neglected member in the Bloomsbury group, her forte in writing short stories cannot be avoided. Mansfield revolutionized the form “devising a subversive poetic narrative” (Mackean 94), radically questioning the “forms and ideas that bind women, and men as well, into inauthentic lives” (Fullbrook 8). Her skill of observation provided her with various subjects for the stories. Even various painful moments of her life influenced her. Among all the influential elements the trauma of the First World War is a prevalent issue in her works. Many of her short stories show the influence of the War on common people. Death, for her was not only a personal loss. The tendency of experimentation with various modern traits made her deal with the theme of death on a psychological level metamorphosing the experiences of trauma into “defused ‘tiny’ tales” (O’Regan). This becomes evident when she uses the stream of consciousness technique and easily explores the internal life of her characters, showing the inherent psychological shifts, shattering the external world. In a way she challenges the 19th c realism and rebels to break through the conventional waves to prove that her art was meant for life’s sake.

If we go through Mansfield’s biography, it would be found that the death of her dear brother Leslie Heron Beauchamp in October 1915 affected her too much and this event may be seen as the turning point of her writing career. Resultantly, the theme of death and loss becomes one of the central aspects of many of her short stories explaining her “desire to join him in death through writing” (Willson 31). In a notebook entry dated 29th Oct., 1915 she mentioned:

“I welcome the idea of death. I believe in immortality because he is not here, and I long to join him.” (15)

The cardinal essence of her story *The Garden Party* (1921) is death, although the story begins with a description of an ‘ideal’ weather, in a day of summer when the upper middle class family of the Sheridans is preparing to organize a garden party. The depiction of the flowers, the well-mowed lawn all reflects the grandeur of the surroundings. Mrs. Sheridan has involved her children in organizing the party so that they can feel themselves as adults. Among the children, Laura, who “loved having to arrange things” (*GP* 1), gets the duty to place the marquee. She imitates her mother’s domineering voice at the very moment she starts working out the duty, although she is seen to cross the social codes and norms when she felt easy to think herself “just like a work-girl” (*GP* 2). In the meantime the huge canna lilies brought by the florist mark their showiness and remind the readers of their refined taste. Overall, the grand ambience of the garden is symbolic of life; development, growth and the abundance of the vibrant flowers suggest fertility – which is in contrast to the theme of death.

To make the party livelier they have kept arrangements of piano and songs; Jose is seen rehearsing a song for the party. Here lies Mansfield’s tricky intervention. The song Jose has chosen has a message of grief and loss:

“This life is *Wee*-ary,
A Tear – a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan*-ges,
... ..
... ..
And then Good-bye!
This life is *Wee*-ary,
Hope comes to Die.
A Dream – a *Wa*-kening.” (*GP* 4-5)

This song is somehow an ironic comment on the party’s preparation. There is a latent hint to the death which remains unannounced. More ironic is the fact that Jose, who is singing the song is totally unaware of the song’s motif, with a “brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile” (*GP* 5) on her face. After the rehearsal Godber’s men arrive with the ordered cream-puffs for the party along with a story – a story regarding a “horrible accident” (*GP* 6), the tagline of which is “A

man killed!” (*GP* 5). This real story takes the central character Laura away to the world of grim reality and makes her tensed with a conflict. She proposes to postpone the party. But the first denial comes from Jose who thinks Laura’s idea as “absurd” and “extravagant” (*GP* 7). Mansfield’s deliberate intrusion of this reference to death obliquely shows the prevalent binary of the high and low status. A death in the low class neighborhood upholds the indifference and hypocrisy of the refined high class. But the subject of death is very enigmatic, which Mansfield tries to show through the psychological reactions in Laura. To get a support Laura rushes to her mother who shocks and surprises her by her callousness and indifference to the news. Laura is astonished as Mrs. Sheridan “seemed amused” and “refused to take Laura seriously” (*GP* 8). Ultimately Mrs. Sheridan announces that “People like that don’t expect sacrifices from us. And it’s not very sympathetic to spoil everybody’s enjoyment as you’re doing now” (*GP* 8). Her refusal to take the news of death seriously suggests to an extent Mrs. Sheridan’s denial of the external world, as if there is an invisible societal prohibition to break the upper middle class circumference. But the death of the carter does not leave Laura so easily. Apparently she agrees with her mother’s words but she decides to “remember it again after the party’s over.... And somehow that seemed quite the best plan...” (*GP* 8).

After the party is over, when the Sheridans are assembled once again, Mr. Sheridan raises the issue of the dead carter. Mrs. Sheridan suggests that they can console the grief stricken family of the neighborhood by providing them with the ‘delicious’ remaining of their party. She immediately arranges a basket, but Laura is “reluctant to go to the cottages because her immediate response questions the widow’s reaction to such an action” (Cooper 69). Her mother’s insistence as usual dissolves her sense of individuality and she shuts the garden gate¹ behind and sets her foot towards the place. It could be seen as “her first real voyage of discovery” (Hanson and Gurr 116), where the dead is lying. Mansfield wonderfully manages to portray Laura’s journey towards this undiscovered world. Gradually the ambience starts changing, the bright sky becomes “pale”; a “big dog” runs like a “shadow” (*GP* 10); she reaches a “smoky, and dark lane” (*GP* 10) that led her to the dead carter’s cottage. This whole journey seems mythical. Her destination is, as if to the valley of death, through the “broad road” (*GP* 10) that is the river Styx that leads nowhere but the underworld. The “big dog” (*GP* 10) is also an indication that she is moving towards the valley of death, as it alludes to the three-headed dog Cerberus (Durix). Laura, time and again, thinks of returning, but she is unaware of the fact that death is a point of

no return; that nobody can defeat mortality. Ultimately she meets Mrs. Scott (the carter's wife), whose sister takes Laura to the dead body. Here Mansfield repeatedly uses the word 'passage' as if the dead man's cottage is a labyrinth, a tunnel to the underworld (Mc Gee 120). She says Laura, pointing towards the carter that, "she looks like a picture" (GP 11), but she doesn't know that the very morning, Laura was also looking like a picture when she heard the news of the Carter's death. But the difference is that the dead will not be able to see again, so Mansfield makes her young character say that the dead was "fast asleep – sleeping so soundly... far away from them So remote, so peaceful" (GP 11). This dead carter, whom Laura does not know at all, has not seen earlier, his loss, his absence takes Laura from the phase of innocence to experience, she gains knowledge. She realizes that the carter has gone far away, crossing the border of the worldly reality. He has gone to such a place, where her lace frock, the grandeur of the garden party doesn't matter at all. After this moment of epiphany, she runs out of the cottage. She finds Laurie, her brother, waiting for her, and informs him that everything "was simply marvelous" (GP 12), but she could not explain what "Isn't life" (12).

To signify the immortal beauty, Mansfield starts her story with sunlight, clear sky, and glamorous garden party, but ends it in a dark, smoky ambience that explains us the experience of mortality, which has overwhelmed Laura to such an extent that she starts stammering, she gets silenced at the thrust of utter reality. In a letter to William Gerhardt (Mar. 1922), Mansfield writes about her motifs in *The Garden Party*:

[a]nd yes, that is what I tried to convey in *The Garden Party*. The diversity of life and how we try to fit in everything, Death included, that is bewildering for a person of Laura's age. She feels things ought to happen differently. First one, then another. But life isn't like that. We haven't the ordering of it. (101-102)

Indeed, death is very much 'bewildering' for an immature youngster like Laura, but the highly mature classy Boss in Mansfield's *The Fly* is also not out of it. Throughout the story we find that he is totally encaptured by a sense of grave loss emanating out of a consciousness of death. Mansfield begins the story in the Boss's office room, where the Boss and his friend "old Mr. Woodfield" (TF 117) were indulging in a cozy atmosphere. Although they were friends, Mansfield does not forget to contrast these two characters. The Boss, who is the older one, is "stout", "rosy", "still going strong" (TF 117); whereas the younger Woodfield is stroke-

stricken, and mentioned as “old” throughout the story, except in the beginning where he peers like a baby through the armchair. The overabundance of the office room is reflected through the “New carpet”, “New furniture”, “Electric heating” (*TF* 117) stock of whisky “from the cellars at Windsor Castle” (*TF* 118). In the meantime Woodifield seems to forget some important news that he wanted to share with the Boss. The Boss, who used to take pleasure always in underestimating his friend, reminding of his high class, showing off his refined taste, and mistreating him as a “Poor old chap” (*TF* 118), offers him a peg of whisky, starts making fun with him. The strong aroma of whisky awakens his memory and he starts describing his daughters’ visit to Belgium where both Woodifield’s and the Boss’s sons were lying in grave. The Boss’s apparent show of confidence is hammered unknowingly by the underclass “poor old chap” (*TF* 118). For the first time it gets clear that class demarcation is blurred by the interference of death which makes the Boss lose his own sense of self. He both hears as well as pretends to turn deaf to the news provided by Woodifield. After the departure of Woodifield, the Boss confines himself in loneliness. He orders the “old dog” (*TF* 119) Macey to ensure his privacy and alienation.

In his alienation the Boss grows nostalgic and the memory of the past days till the death of his son haunts him. He recollects the happiness of those days when his son used to assist him in his regular office activities. Between those happy days of the past and the days of his present alienation, lie the World War I and the consequent death of his only son. The lively young son of the Boss has now been turned into a photograph inside an old photo frame amidst the newly furnished office room. The Boss was terribly affected by the death of his only son and took it for granted that such a grave loss can never be compensated by any means. But, what happens quite strangely that he now fails to weep while commemorating the time with his son. On the other hand, old Woodifield’s son Reggie was also killed in the same war, but the old man seems to be less affected by the memory of his son. Mansfield shows that time acts as a healer in both the cases and the demands of life are stronger than the memories of the dead children in both the cases. That is why the Boss is very lavishly devoted to life, which in a sense makes him refuse the reality, and therefore, still he does not believe his son to be dead and rather imagines that his son remains “asleep” and “unchanged, unblemished in his uniform” (*TF* 119) inside the grave. Woodifield feels happy only for the reason that the graveyard in Belgium is well maintained and there is a “nice broad path” (*TF* 119) inside it. One would clearly notice a striking similarity

between the two stories as Mansfield uses the reference to “broad” road/ path which could be seen as a metaphoric representation of life towards the ultimate destination of death.

The situation becomes more climactic with the entry of a fly, which had fallen into the broad inkpot kept on the Boss’s table. It draws his attention, and he rescues the fly from the inkpot, keeps it on a blotting paper, giving it a new life. As the fly becomes ready to fly again, the Boss plans a strategic test for it and drops a “heavy blot” (*TF* 121) of ink on it. The very thought that the fly is tenacious enough to survive every attack by any means, raises his expectation and every time the fly gets ready to fly, he drops ink over it successively, experimenting with its “right spirit” (*TF* 121). He continuously encourages the tiny creature to get up. But ultimately, the fly surpasses all the limits of life’s endurance and succumbs to death. There is no sign of life in the body of the fly now, as its “front legs were not to be seen” (*TF*121). In this section of the story, Mansfield portrays the horror and the trauma of death. It appears that the Boss finds himself in the place of the fly, because he has been trying desperately to win over the trauma of death since his son’s demise six years ago. But the trauma of his son’s death still stays with him like a shadow, which is quite inseparable from his existence. Through the process of testing the stamina of the fly, actually the Boss tests his own stamina to resist the thought of death, to confront and combat with the shadow of death. The office chamber of the Boss seems to be a metaphoric parallel of the inkpot, where the suffering of the fly had begun. At this point, Fumio Yoshioka’s comment seems illuminating when he says: “The tiny inkpot marks a crossroad where life and death meet, where an instinctive reaction for survival and an inveterate desire for release from fear of death entangle each other” (31). The fly plays the role of a messenger which makes it clear that death is an untimely visitor and there is no respite from the embrace of death. The death of the puny fly has a massive impact on its murderer, who feels “positively frightened” (*TF* 121) as “a grinding feeling of wretchedness” (*TF* 121) seizes him.

Mansfield does not elaborate or explain the reason behind the Boss’s wretchedness. The Boss took six long years to dispense with the trauma of death, but is it really possible to deny death? Is it possible to forget this grim reality? Mansfield puts these questions in front of the readers. She shows the Boss’s fight with the shadow of death till the last moment. Ultimately the Boss realizes that he will sure be a loser in this battle and then decides to dive into oblivion once again. He throws away the “corpse” (*TF* 121) of the fly in the waste-paper basket, as he did put

aside the memory of his dead son for the last six years. This very moment of epiphany bewilders him to such an extent that he does not stammer like Laura in *The Garden Party*, but totally forgets what “he had been thinking about before” (*TF* 121). In both these stories Mansfield depicts the theme of death against the common background of the World War I. But ultimately she shows that even the devastating war fails to interrupt the movement of life against the traumatic events and memory of death.

Katherine Mansfield’s fiction is not representative of the beautiful and the picturesque world around, but a reflection of the issues of reality. In her *Journal* she expressed the fact – “I must experience first, how can I write about things if I don’t experience them?” (Qtd. in Mansfield, Web). She had herself experienced the trauma of death, suffered from psychological crisis, which had shaped her perceptions regarding life and its meaning. It is a much known fact that most of Mansfield’s characters go through a moment of epiphany; a point of zenith where they are illuminated in self-realization, which seldom points towards happiness. The central characters in *The Garden Party* and *The Fly* are also no exceptions. Mansfield nicely depicts the epiphanic moments as the “little grain of truth” (*Letters* Vol.4 57) larking deep into their psyche and soul. May be this is the reason she preferred to leave her texts open-ended, and to put her readers at stake finding a particular resolution.² In both these stories, the central characters, belonging to two different age groups, face the trauma of death differently. For Laura in *The Garden Party*, it was “simply marvellous” (*GP* 12) that made her stammer and stumble with the notion of life; for the Boss in *The Fly*, it was “a grinding feeling of wretchedness” (*TF* 121) that made him uncomfortable and forgetful. It becomes evident that after the epiphanic moments, both the characters acquire a transformed vision of life. They can now perceive the fact that there is virtually nothing in materialistic pleasures of life. Sad and happy moments, the crude and pleasant realities lay side by side to weave the tapestry of life and they are inseparable parts of the whole life. Dominic Head points out: “the epiphany is compromised. It embodies a dawning awareness of the disparate elements of life and their random simultaneity...” (136). The untimely death of Mansfield’s brother Leslie, during the War, made her depict the pains and trauma of death through the accidental death of the carter, and the sons of the Boss and Woodifield in these stories. The moments of epiphanies in the case of Laura and the Boss, remain very much the epiphanic moments for Mansfield herself. As Mansfield believed in immortality, she has depicted the theme of death and loss in her stories in such a way that obliquely upholds an urge

for life. Her fictional characters struggle desperately to get away from the trauma of death and ultimately emphasize that, despite the shadow of death over life, it is far more “artful” (TF 121) to live life.

Abbreviations used:

The Garden Party = GP

The Fly = TF

Notes

- Angela Smith marks that Mansfield’s stories often portrayed young characters or children, who tried to break the shackles by which the adults tried to restrict/confine them. For this she used the ‘garden gate’ as a symbol, and depicted the young characters breaking away the gate and moving forward to explore the unknown. In the story *The Garden Party*, the issue of the death in the neighborhood, makes Laura transcend the obstacle of the garden gate.
- Emma Short at a conference entitled *Shaping Modernism: Katherine Mansfield and her Contemporaries* organized by the Katherine Mansfield Society on 26 March, 2011, in her paper, named “ “One is Somehow Suspended”: Katherine Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen and the Spaces In Between” elaborated “ the fact that Mansfield often denied her readers a resolution, which results in a “never reaching arrival”.

Works Cited

Cooper, Lucille. *Is there a Woman in the Text? A Feminist Exploration of Katherine Mansfield’s Search for Authentic Selves in a Selection of Short Stories*. Diss. University of South Africa, 2008. Print.

- Durix, Carole Froude. "Point Counterpoint: Both Sides of the Broad Road in Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" and Witi Ihimera's "This Life is Weary" ". *The Fine Instrument: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*. Ed. Paulette Michel and Michel Dupis. Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 2001. Print.
- Eliot, T.S. *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934. Print.
- Fullbrook, Kate. *Katherine Mansfield*. Harvester: Indiana University Press, 1986. Print.
- Hanson, Clare, and Andrew Gurr. *Katherine Mansfield*. London: Macmillan Press, 1981. Print.
- Mackean, Ian. *The Essentials of ... Literature in English Post- 1914*. Euston Road, London NW1 3BH: Hodder Arnold, 2005. Print.
- Mansfield, Katherine. *The Garden Party*(1921). Katherine Mansfield Society. Web. 21 Mar.2014. <<http://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org>>
- "The Fly" (1922). *Modern Prose: Stories, Essays and Sketches*. Ed. Michael Thorpe. India: Oxford University Press. 2011. Print.
- *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*. Ed. John Middleton Murry. US: Kessinger Publishing, 1927. Web. 4 Jun. 2014. Google Books.
- Mc Gee, Dian. *Writing the Meal: Dinner in the Early Twentieth Century Women Writers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. Print.
- Nagenknocht, Edward. "Katherine Mansfield". *The English Journal*17.4 (Apr. 1928): 272-284. Web. 8 Apr. 2014. <www.jstor.org/stable/804029>
- O'Regan, Kirsten. "Cult Classic: Defining Katherine Mansfield." *Arts and Culture*. (18 Mar.

2013): n. pag. Web. 1 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2013/03/18/cult-classic-defining-katherine-mansfield/>>

O'Sullivan, Vincent, and Margaret Scott. Eds. *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: 1922-1923*. Vols. 2 and 4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008. Print.

Scott, Margaret. Ed. *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*. Vol.2. Canterbury: Lincoln University Press, 1997. Print.

Short, Emma. "One is Somehow Suspended": Katherine Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen and the Spaces In Between". Unpublished paper presented at Katherine Mansfield Society (KMS) Conference, entitled *Shaping modernism: Katherine Mansfield and her Contemporaries*. 26 Mar. 2011.

Smith, Angela. "Landscape and the Foreigner Within: Katherine Mansfield and Emily Larr." *Landscape and Empire: 1700- 2000*. Ed. Glenn Hooper. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005. Google Books. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Willson, J.M. "Mansfield as (Post) colonial- Modernist: Rewriting the Contract with Death". *Katherine Mansfield and the (Post) colonial*. Ed. J.M. Willson, G. Kimber and D. Da Sousa Correa. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 29-44. Web. 6 Apr. 2014. <<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6061/>>

Woolf, Leonard, and James Strachey. Eds. *Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956. Print.

Yoshioka, Fumio. "Reading Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield's 'The Fly'". Web. 30 Apr. 2014. <ousar.lib.okayama-u.ac.jp/file/13239/24_027_033.pdf>

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: No Concern for Us?

Sourav Pal

Abstract: The dystopia in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948) originates from a specifiable historical experience – Stalinist Russia in particular and Europe in general during the World War II. It depicts a nightmarish future police-State which has made totalitarianism absolute on the basis of a complete, unquestionable and suffocating uniformity, and predicts, as a sort of warning to posterity, the possible outcome of certain tendencies if they are given opportunity to grow unchecked. Does this fictional world have any relevance to the world we live in?

This paper focuses on three such major tendencies of the *Nineteen Eighty-Four* world – destruction of any trace of individualism and personal freedom by forcing conformity through a rigorous, omnipresent, State-organized surveillance; use of media as a tranquillizer against intellectual awareness and for systematic reconstruction of history in favour of the ruling ideology; and complete dominance over language as a means of gaining political dominance – and examines how far these tendencies are operative in the present society, and wherefrom comes the resistance, if any.

Keywords: Surveillance, Totalitarianism, Falsification of history, Ideological State Apparatus, Media, Language.

The object of this paper is to make a comparative study of the fictional future world portrayed by Orwell in his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the world we live in today, in order to find out whether this dystopian world picture projected by Orwell has any claim to reality or any relevance to our present world.

Before we go into details it is important to remember the years during which the novel was written. Orwell started writing the novel in August 1946 and completed it in November 1948. During this time he had already witnessed the atrocities of the World War II, the massacres, the inhuman cruelty and horror, the hypocrisy of the leaders, the surveillance by the governments, the repressive measures taken in the name of emergency, and the general tendency towards the debasement of human nature. As a war-correspondent of the BBC he had seen the systematic fabrication of information by the British war-time Ministry of Information. He had also witnessed the totalitarian tendency of socialism, aiming at a systematic destruction of individuality and freedom for a complete, unquestionable and suffocating uniformity, as manifested both in the Communism of Stalinist Russia and the Fascism of Italy. All these are incorporated in a horrifying fictional account of a future world where a successful oligarchic totalitarianism reigns supreme and any deviation or effort to

counter conformity is systematically and brutally crushed with the deviant or non-conformist himself.

The novel is set in an imaginary 1984 world where three super-powers reign – Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia – engaged in a continuous and never-ending war between them. The hero, Winston Smith lives in London, which is the chief city of Airstrip One, a major part of Oceania. Winston’s world is ruled by a political system called *Ingsoc*, i.e. ‘English Socialism’. Though called socialism, it actually is nothing but an oligarchic despotism based on the principles of hierarchy, unequal distribution of wealth, rigorous and complete surveillance by the State, ‘doublethink’, and systematic destruction of the past. Winston’s World is, therefore, a Police-State ruled by the Party that came to power after its successful Revolution against Capitalism, and since then has encroached every institution, every system, and every private space so thoroughly as to gain a complete and invincible dominance over life itself. The Party’s worldview is manifested in its three slogans: “WAR IS PEACE”, “FREEDOM IS SLAVERY”, and “IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”. At the top of the Party is the mythical figure of a certain *Big Brother* who enjoys a God-like omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. Enormous colour posters depicting his face are tacked to every wall of the country simply to remind and warn people that “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”. The actual surveillance is, in fact, maintained by the Thought Police by means of hidden microphones, the ever-watching Telescreens placed in every single room and on every street of the country, and by innumerable spies scattered everywhere. The aim is to detect and stop *Thought crime* i.e. the slightest difference in thinking that marks a deviance from the Party propaganda¹.

The society of Oceania is divided into three classes – the Inner Party, the Outer Party and the Proles. The Inner Party is the privileged class that enjoys power and all the material comforts of the world. Below it is the Outer Party whose members are greater in number and less privileged than those of the Inner Party. Below them are the dumb masses, known as the Proles, who constitute about eighty-five percent of the population and live like beasts. Thus *Ingsoc* has carried out the socialist programme with the result that economic inequality and hierarchy have been made permanent and

¹ The whole arrangement reminds us of Foucault’s description of the state-inflicted surveillance in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* in terms of ‘Panopticon’, the concept of the ring-like prison derived from Bentham.

final. It has made collectivism a secure basis of oligarchy with the belief that wealth and privileges are most easily defended when they are possessed jointly. Any protest against or dissatisfaction with the system is systematically and successfully smothered by means of continual falsification of information, imposition of a blind leader-worship, minute surveillance, framed-up trials, torture, brainwashing and mass-killing through 'purges' and secret assassinations. Winston's struggle is, therefore, against a system which has made totalitarianism absolute, complete, and this is why he knows from the very beginning of the ultimate futility of his revolt against the Party.

This much will suffice to form a concrete view of the world depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The question that arises now is whether this fictional world has any resemblance with the real world of 1984 and later about which it is a kind of prediction, or any relevance in the world we live in now in the twenty-first century.

There can be no doubt that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not simply a story about the adventures of an imaginary individual in a nightmarish world, but originates in a specifiable historical experience, and stands in a particular complex relationship with a recognizable historical world. It exaggerates certain tendencies of the contemporary world in order to examine and predict the possible outcome of these if they are given opportunity to grow unchecked and unresisted. Orwell's own comments about this novel are relevant in this respect. In his letter written just day after the Press Release of the novel (June 1949) in response to a cable from an official of the United Automobile Workers, worried at the initial reviews of the book, he says:

My recent novel is NOT intended as an attack on Socialism or on the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism. I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it *could* arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas to their logical consequences. The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order

to emphasize that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere.²

It is clear from this excerpt that Orwell views his book as a kind of warning to posterity about the necessity of resisting the tendencies of authoritarianism and totalitarianism for the sake of freedom and humanity. Our concern is to trace how far these tendencies are still current in the comparatively liberal world of the twenty-first century.

Let us consider them one by one.

A major tendency of the totalitarian society as depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is towards a systematic destruction of individualism and privacy. A party-member has literally no spare time and is never alone except in his bed. To do anything that suggests a taste for solitude, even to go for a walk alone, is to bring danger on oneself, because individualism is regarded as the same thing as eccentricity, and no non-corporate behaviour is tolerated by the state. No personal relationship between two individuals is endured; love-affair is impossible; erotic enjoyment is crime; there are no friends but only comrades. The ever-suspicious State keeps constant watch over the personal life of its citizens through telescreens and spies in order to detect even the slightest deviation from the accepted norms. Every sound one makes is overheard, every movement scrutinized, and every thought of a person is guessed at through a close examination of his demeanour. To keep a personal record like a diary which is not scrutinized by the state, is a deadly crime. Equally criminal is to wear an improper expression on one's face – called 'face crime' in *Newspeak* – for example, to look incredulous when a victory is announced. Children and young girls are especially encouraged and trained to spy on their parents and neighbours and inform the *Thought Police* in case of any deviance³. The persons convicted of 'Thought crime' or of any political activity against the State are surprised by sudden arrests at night, taken to the secret chambers of the *Ministry of Love*, made to confess the real and scores of other imaginary crimes through inhuman tortures, and then simply annihilated from the earth: "In the vast

² Excerpt from Orwell's letter republished in the OUP edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: OUP, 1984), Appendix H.

³ Reminds us of McCarthyism in the United States during the Second Red Scare in the 1950s when children were inspired to spy on their parents and neighbours on each other as part of the systematic witch-hunt for any trace of Communist sympathy.

majority of cases there was no trial, no report of the arrest. People simply disappeared, always during the night. Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you have even done was wiped out, your one time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished, annihilated: *vaporized* was the usual word"⁴ (21).

Now, is everything fine in the world we live in? Apparently it seems to be. We have privacy and solitude. We have freedom of speech and thinking, at least in theory. We can make friends or love anyone at our own will, and keep personal records. We are not being constantly watched at by the State. But is it so? We have access to these above-mentioned freedoms only when we are not stepping outside the accepted norms. As soon as we do something freakish, for example, even loiter alone for a time aimlessly on a street, we may be challenged by a policeman and asked to produce our I-card. We can keep our privacy intact so long we don't incur the suspicion of the State. But if we do so, we may have our phones tapped, our personal conversations recorded, our computers hacked, and our movements scrutinized. This trend has gone worse in our post-9/11 terrorism-ridden world. Even in a so-called heaven of democracy and individualism like the USA any person of Asian origin naturally arouses suspicion. And in this present age of technological advancement and especially Internet and Social Networking Sites it is very easy to spy on an individual for a long time without making him least aware that he is being watched. Few Americans know, for example, that their bodies are X-rayed whenever they enter an Airport or a tube station. It may be argued that all these measures are necessary to stop terrorist activities, and that common people are not harassed in this way. But terrorism is often a product of the State-inflicted violence itself. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* both Julia and Winston confirm O'Brien that they are ready to commit the most brutal kind of violence in order to counter the tyranny of the state. Apart from that, don't we often read in newspapers about innocent persons being arrested, tortured and even killed by the repressive machineries of the State like Police or Army in mere suspicion or even in absence of that? Don't we often hear of a person '*vaporized*' in a fake encounter in Kashmir or Gujarat and then either accused of being a terrorist or simply forgotten? The case of Sekh Sohrabuddin and Kausar Bai in Gujarat is only a recent example. And it must be remembered that these things are happening in democratic countries like India or USA where a certain freedom of speech and thinking is granted, even by Constitution, and where media takes an active role

⁴ All citations to the text are from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books Ltd., 1954).

in making these incidents public. Nobody knows what really happens in countries like China, Iran or North Korea where freedom of speech or of the Press is considerably restricted. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these repressive tendencies which are amplified in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are very much present in our world, though only restrained from growing unchecked by the presence of preventive measures like human rights organizations, at least partly free media, and an active judiciary.

However, we should not forget in this respect that Internet and social media is a double-edged weapon which can be used not only for such secret State-organized surveillance but also for exposure of the secret actions taken against people or individuals by various State agencies. Internet in the present age has thus become an important site for resistance. Very pertinent to this context are the recent controversies regarding WikiLeaks and its founder and editor-in-chief Julian Paul Assange⁵. WikiLeaks became internationally well known in 2010 when it started publishing U.S. military and diplomatic documents and soon began to be treated as an 'enemy of the State'. Since then WikiLeaks has been involved in the publication of a considerable amount of secret materials including documents related to extrajudicial killings in Kenya, a report of toxic waste dumping on the coast of Côte d'Ivoire, *Church of Scientology* manuals, Guantanamo Bay detention camp procedures, the 12 July 2007 Baghdad airstrike video among other things⁶. Retribution came swift. In November 2010, Assange became subject to a European Arrest Warrant in response to a Swedish police request for questioning in relation to a sexual assault charge which was previously dropped and picked up again clearly in relation to the present developments. In June 2012 after he failed to surrender to his bail the UK authorities declared Assange as having absconded. Since 19 June 2012, he has been living practically a captive's life inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he has been granted diplomatic asylum. The British government intends to extradite Assange to Sweden under that arrest warrant once he leaves the embassy, which Assange says may result in his subsequent extradition to the United States to face charges over the diplomatic cables leaks. What Assange says about the philosophy behind WikiLeaks in his blog is very crucial with regard to our present context: "the more secretive or unjust an organization is, the more

⁵ Most of the information regarding Assange and WikiLeaks are taken from the very well-documented entry on Julian Assange in Wikipedia.

⁶ Ackland, Richard (9 April 2010). "Leaks pour forth from the Wiki well of information". *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved 3 December 2010.

leaks induce fear and paranoia in its leadership and planning coterie. . . . Since unjust systems, by their nature, induce opponents, and in many places barely have the upper hand, mass leaking leaves them exquisitely vulnerable to those who seek to replace them with more open forms of governance."⁷

The role of the media is also seriously treated by Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but mainly as an Ideological State Apparatus instead of a site for resistance. Two major themes that are again and again focused on in this novel are the official manipulation of the flow of information in Oceania and the systematic falsification of history in its Ministry of Truth. While working for the BBC for three years (1940-43) during the World War II, Orwell had witnessed at first hand the official manipulation of information, ironically, in the service of 'democracy' against 'totalitarianism'. In many writings of the time he noted these totalitarian possibilities of the BBC and other such media of mass communication as radio, cinema and newspapers. In a totalitarian society these become effective tools in the hands of the ruling class to disseminate its propaganda and mislead the common people. Thus in Oceania *The Times* acts as the mouthpiece of the Party. The telescreens are used not only to keep watch on the Party-members, but also to transmit continuously false information about the plenty and happiness of the present rules of the Party, and thereby brainwash the people. The section of the *Ministry of Truth* in which Winston works deals with the systematic and continuous alteration of the past in the Party's favour. It collects all copies of books, newspapers and documents, tracks down in them every bit of information that goes against the Party, replaces them with suitable versions, and then destroys the original copy. There is a definite political purpose in doing this. This makes any comparative study of ideologies and the conditions of life of different ages impossible. If people don't know anything about the past, the different ideas and attitudes to life it contained, then there would be only one set of valid and correct thinking – that propagated by the Party – and consequently, this would give a supreme, unchallengeable, invincible power to the Party. The people's 'Ignorance' thus becomes the Party's 'Strength'. As runs the Party slogan: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (34). Clearly it is against this kind of 'control through ignorance' that Assange and his followers are claiming to wage their war. 'Leaks' in their hands are thus a major weapon to sabotage the hegemony of the State.

⁷ "The non linear effect of leaks on unjust systems of governance". IQ.org. 31 December 2006. Retrieved 2 October 2007.

Orwell has shown another use of media and art as a sort of tranquillizer against intellectual awareness. A section of the *Ministry of Truth* where Julia works, deals with proletarian literature, music and entertainment. "Here were produced rubbishy newspapers containing almost nothing except sport, crime and astrology, sensational five-cent novelettes, films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs.... There was even a whole sub-section – Pornosec ... engaged in producing the lowest kind of pornography ..." (41-42). The Proles are thus kept half-educated fools engaged in silly and obscene entertainments so that they lack the thinking capacity necessary to realize and oppose the injustice of the Party's rule.

Now can we deny that the same things continue, in overt or covert ways, in the very society we live in? Media's power of forming public opinion is often subtly manipulated by the governments of different countries in order to maintain the status quo. Even in democratic countries media and governments maintain a slippery relationship in a way that to call a newspaper or a T.V. channel impartial is altogether impossible. And even in common activities of the government people are denied their right to information. The distortion of truth by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry during war or even in normal situation is only too obvious a fact. Cinema is often used as a popular medium for forming public opinion and a blind patriotic spirit that would make people forget the problems at home. Thus during the Cold War Hollywood movies frequently dealt with the Russians as the most abominable enemy, as did some Bollywood movies with Pakistan immediately after the Cargill Wars. As for preventing the uneducated and half-educated mass from having a strong political awareness by means of making them interested in unimportant things there can be little doubt. Cricket, Bollywood and T.V. soaps successfully play that role in India.

However, even more important and dangerous than that is the concept of the systematic reconstruction of the past as a means of gaining political dominance. Don't we see in our country text books, especially books of history, being changed every five years to suit the particular ideology of the Party that comes to rule? This is done to negate any possibility of contradiction or opposition beforehand. Brainwashing is most easy if memory of the past can be destroyed. And who knows better than the politicians that the memory of the common people is by nature the most fragile

thing in the world? We can remember in this respect Althusser's comment on the role of education as Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) in the contemporary society for taking control of human brains at the most early stage of their development. Althusser regards the educational ISA as the most dominant ISA in the capitalist social formations. According to him in this present age the "School-Family couple has replaced the Church-Family couple" (154) of previous epochs:

It takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most 'vulnerable,' squeezed between the family State apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy). Somewhere around the age of sixteen, a huge mass of children are ejected 'into production': these are the workers or small peasants. Another portion of scholastically adapted youth carries on . . . it goes somewhat further, until it falls by the wayside and fills the posts of small and middle technicians,

white-collar workers, small and middle executives, petty bourgeois of all kinds. A last portion reaches the summit, either to fall into intellectual semi-employment, or to provide, as well as the 'intellectuals of the collective labourer,' the agents of exploitation (capitalists, managers), the agents of repression (soldiers, policemen, politicians, administrators, etc.) and the professional ideologists (priests of all sorts...).

(155-156)

Thus each of these children is provided, according to its capacity of intake, with its proper dose of the ruling ideology necessary to suit the role it has to play as a cog in the great wheel of the State in later years. Once this brainwashing is complete and their memory is stored with necessary codes and doctrines from the textbooks, these children, it is believed, will continue to play their respective roles throughout their lives in favour of the ruler. That is why for every ruler dominating the memory of the mass through reconstruction of history is a priority for perpetuating his authority.

Let us come next to the question of language as a means of gaining political dominance and as an instrument of achieving totalitarian control over free thinking. The matter of language is central to Orwell's conception of the suffocating tyranny of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Newspeak is the official language of Oceania and the sole aim of it is the narrowing of the range of thought by the destruction of vocabulary. As Syme, the Newspeak expert, explains to Winston that thus narrowing the scope of free thinking they will in the end "make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it" (49). According to him, "The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak" (49). And when this happens, he says, "there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (50). As Alok Rai precisely puts it in his *Orwell and the Politics of Despair*: "Winston's struggle in the novel is, to a large extent, a struggle to find an adequate language or, what is nearly the same thing, an adequate critical location from which he can regard the world whose language holds him in bondage" (122).

In reality, control over language has always been used as a means of achieving political dominance in this world. Language gives identity both to an individual and to a race. Robbing a people of its language is therefore nothing but robbing it of its identity, culture and individuality. When a foreign language is imposed on a native community by foreign rulers it certainly narrows the range and originality of their thinking, and makes them think in the same way as the rulers think. Thereby it successfully lessens the possibility of opposition or protest, and establishes uniformity. So take away from a people its language and you are successful in gaining an ideological upper hand over it. This is the reason why the British tried to give permanence to their colonial enterprise in India by creating a new class of English-knowing people as their loyal followers in this country, or Pakistan tried to impose Urdu as the official language on the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, the protest against which at the cost of a number of precious lives on 21st February, 1952 gave us the International Mother Language Day. Language is, indeed, a very powerful weapon in the operation of power, not only in political sense but also in our one-to-one correspondence. Don't we often see an educated person using his knowledge of English to dominate and suppress the voice of his inferior who is not so efficient in that language? This tendency in a man becomes totalitarian in a state when it tries to establish a uniformity of thinking and

a complete subservience to central authority by making a particular language dominant over others. It is this tendency of suppressing diversity of thinking and multiple voices to make only one thought and one voice rule that worked behind the decision to make Hindi the chief language all over India after Independence. It is very important to understand the nature of this politics especially at present when every year we find a particular community trying to assert its identity by demanding a separate state for itself on the basis of language.

The limitations of this paper make any further discussion impossible. But the points so far discussed, I believe, will suffice to make it clear that the threats to human freedom and individuality that Orwell took to their extreme to horrify us in this novel, in fact, lurk in every society and every generation, our present society being no exception. Sometimes they become a real danger for humanity under certain political and historical conditions, for example, in absence of democracy, or during a one-party rule or military dictatorship. At other times they remain concealed under the disguise of various system and ideologies. Can they be ever carried to such an extent as Orwell has shown us? It may seem no. But what will happen if someday – which seems very probable – terrorism becomes as deadly as to give a more than enough justification to such repressive measures as shown by Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? Will then people compromise their freedom for security? Future will give the answer. Meanwhile, it will be unwise to ignore the dystopian world picture presented by Orwell in this novel because it draws our attention to some really possible dangers to democracy and freedom unless they are properly taken care of.

Works Cited

Primary sources

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Harmondsworth : Penguin Books Ltd., 1954. Print.

---. Letter. Appendix H. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1984. Print.

Secondary Sources

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*.
Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971. 127-188. Print.

Calder, Jenni. *Huxley and Orwell : Brave New World and Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London : Edward Arnold,
1976. Print.

**Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan.
London: Penguin Books, 1991. Print.**

Hammond, J.R. *A George Orwell Companion*. London : Macmillan, 1982. Print.

"Julian Assange". *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc., Dec. 2013. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

Meyers, Jeffrey. *A Reader's Guide to George Orwell*. London : Thames and Hudson, 1975.
Print.

Rai, Alok. *Orwell and the Politics of Despair*. Cambridge : Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988. Print.

Singh, Paras Mani. *George Orwell : As a Political Novelist*. Delhi : Amar Prakashan, 1987.
Print.

Winniffrith, Tom, and William V. Whitehead. *1984 and All's Well?*. London : Macmillan, 1984. Print.

Need the Mask of the ‘Man’? : Exploding Masculinity in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*

Asis De

Soumen Chatterjee

Abstract: Gender and sex are two totally different terms, but we often confuse them as synonymous. Sex refers to one’s biological identity, while gender is an artificial construction rooted in sociology. The hierarchy of gender is dominated by patriarchy that imposes specific attributes both for males and females. Men are often associated with heroism, intelligence, rationality, self-reliance and courage whereas women are supposed to be docile, ineffectual, emotional and timid. And males even at the cost of their individuality have to wear the mask of masculinity in order to perform in this reveal show of life as the ‘Man’.

Now patriarchy, using religion, literature and media as its tools, has propagated the cult of masculinity among its members. Literature down the ages has also held masculinity on a high pedestal and the male writers have presented an exalted image of men in their works. These male writers have also eulogized the cult of masculinity in their works. But the female writers have debunked this cult of manliness in their writings and challenged patriarchy-defined images of males. This paper, using Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927) as a case study, will explore how Woolf in this novel has torn the mask of the ‘Man’ that males have to wear in order to cope up in the patriarchal society. This paper’s contribution to scholarship lies in pointing out how men and women are alike in their behavioral aspects. This paper will also attempt to establish how Woolf in this novel, in her own unique way, has challenged and subverted the normative gender roles too.

Key words: Gender, Sex, Masculinity, Patriarchy, Man, Individuality.

We often confuse two terms— gender and sex as synonymous, but they are diametrically opposed to each other. Sex is one's biological identity, while gender is an artificial construction grounded in sociology and gender roles are culturally defined. Gender refers to the socially constructed and culturally dictated roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that the concerned society considers appropriate for men and women. So, gender refers to “those characteristics of socio-cultural origin which are conventionally associated with different sexes.”(Goring et al 248). Moreover, this theoretical construction of gender is usually dominated by patriarchy that imposes specific roles and activities to men as well as women. Patriarchy attributes men with power, voice, restraint, self-control, self-reliance, authority, intelligence and courageous activities while women are associated with timidity, ineffectuality, docile and impulsive behaviors, passivity and physicality. In the language of Fiona Tolan, “Women are always associated with the passive body, and men with the active mind...” (321). Actually, in the patriarchal social set up “a true man [is] a man of action who control[s] his passions, and who in his harmonious and well-proportioned bodily structure express[es] his contentment to moderation and self-control”. (Mosse 101) Besides the patriarchal pattern restricts a woman's activity within the confines of home and family while a man has access to the whole world. Moreover, a woman is supposed to be an inferior subject of the interior world and therefore, requires the constant vigil and monitoring by the appropriate male authority who is basically a lord to her. Now human beings fulfil their concerned social roles as men and women [i.e. their gender identity] even at the cost of their individuality. Actually, men, very much like women, equally have been trapped in the confines of a suffocating system of social expectations and their lives have been shaped in accordance with the patriarchal parameters.

This fulfilment of gender identity at the cost of individuality was prevalent in England even in the first half of the twentieth century and Virginia Woolf, the novelist of our choice here, was also fully aware of how men, just like women, had to sacrifice their individuality at the altar of patriarchal social expectations. In *Moments of Being* (1939) Virginia Woolf has reflected how the career of her male relatives is framed in the crucible of oppressive social expectations. She writes, “Every one of our male relations was shot into that [patriarchal] machine at the age of ten and emerged at sixty as a Head Master, an Admiral, a Cabinet Minister, or the Warden of a

college”.(Woolf 153) (my insertion). What Woolf implies is that males are bound to wear the mask of masculinity in order to cope up in the patriarchal society.

Actually, in the patriarchal social set up masculinity is always held at the high pedestal. Moreover, patriarchy through the capillaries of life like literature, media, religion and others promote the cult of masculinity among men and women. As a result, both men and women become obsessed with the concept of masculinity; men at every step of life want to follow the beaten track of the macho men, the ideal role models of masculinity. So, men, like women, suffer from an “interior colonization” (Millett 25) in the patriarchal social set up and they blindly try to follow the patriarchal role models of masculinity.

Now, literature has also promulgated this type of exalted image of men and the subjugated image of women over the years. But in the hands of the female writers this type of stereotypical presentation of men as the emblems of power, heroism, courage, rationality, self-discipline, self-reliance and authority has been debunked. Challenging the culturally and socially defined image of men, they have shown that men are also impulsive, weak-hearted and depend on others (women). Women writers, like Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot and others in their works, have deconstructed the exalted image of men, propagated down the ages by the patriarchal social system. They have shown how beneath their authoritative exterior, men are also impulsive, childish and indecisive. Actually, the texts of these female authors are sites for “the jostling of orthodox and subversive ideas” (Greenblatt ii) about masculinity. Now this paper, using Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927) as a case study, will show how here Woolf has dismantled and redefined the conventional concept of masculinity too.

In this novel from the very beginning, Mr. Ramsay appears to be a patriarch as he has totally imbibed the patriarchy sponsored conceptions of masculinity. Like a true champion of patriarchy, he wants to dominate his whole household. It is for this that he does not permit the journey of his son James to the lighthouse at the very beginning. He tells him that there will be rain tomorrow which will hamper the journey:

But, said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, ‘it won’t be fine’. (Woolf 8)

He stubbornly sticks to his own weather forecast and spoils other members’ plan of visiting the lighthouse next day. Like a true disciple of patriarchy, he also believes that he is heroic. He

associates himself with the great adventurers like Drake and Raleigh, who are the role models of heroism and masculinity. Mr. Ramsay, the professionally successful academician and philosopher also likes to view his intellectual achievement in terms of linear progression through alphabet. He thinks that true intellectual greatness dawns upon those few men who reaches Z. He laments over the fact that he has reached only Q and can only move towards R:

He reached Q. Very few people in the whole of England ever reach Q....But after Q? What comes next? After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance. Z is only reached once by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it would be something. Here at least Q. He dug his heels in at Q. Q he was sure of. (Woolf 39)

Probably here by Q he means to say the power of questioning and by R the power of reasoning. These two faculties are also inevitably linked with masculinity and his intention of having these two highlights how far he has absorbed the cult of masculinity within himself. He also regards himself as an intellectual explorer who is not even daunted by the prospect of facing death in his search of intellectuality:

“Feelings that would not have disgraced a leader who, now that the snow has begun to fall and the mountain top is covered in mist, knows that he must lay himself down and die before morning comes, stole upon him... he would find some crag of rock, and there, his eyes fixed on the storm, trying to the end to pierce the darkness, he would die standing. He would never reach R.” (Woolf 40)

These types of melodramatic self-images clearly demonstrate Ramsay’s total absorption in the patriarchy sponsored ideas of masculinity and his masculine egotism. Actually, Mr. Ramsay, with his incessant obsession over reaching Q, embodies the hegemonic masculine ideals of a gender, more concerned with philosophical pursuits and intellectual queries.

But underneath this apparently staunch patriarch, there lies another Ramsay who is emotional, indecisive, hesitant and in need of support from others. On close analysis of this novel, we find that he always suffers from insecurities and has “extreme anxiety about himself” (Woolf 117). He constantly meditates whether his books will be successful or not; he constantly questions of his place within academia:

“He was always uneasy about himself. That troubled her. He would always be worrying about his own books—will they be read, are they good, why aren’t they better, what do people think of me?” (128).

This insecurity, anxiety, self-scrutiny and brooding over his own success and failure set him at polar opposite from the classic patriarchal icons of masculinity like Dalloway in Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Percival in *The Waves* (1931) who felt no sense of anxiety and no need for self-examination. Indeed his close self-examination and brooding over what others will think of him set him totally aloof from the traditional patriarchal role models of masculinity. Unlike a macho man, he never considers himself to be a man of success. On the contrary, he is often lost in self-denigration:

“Mr. Ramsay repeated, never taking his eyes from her face, that he was a failure”
(Woolf 43).

Actually, like Bernard and Louise in Woolf’s *The Waves* (1931), Mr. Ramsay is extremely self-reflexive and constantly focused on his social identity. These aspects of his character separate him from the mythic masculine characters.

Moreover, this “awkward and ungainly” (Lee 20) man also requires others to boost up his morale. Mr. Ramsay, like a true patriarchal model of masculinity, hates their rational emotionality on the part of women:

“The extraordinary irrationality of her [Mrs. Ramsay] remark; the folly of women’s minds enraged him”. (Woolf 60)

Yet he needs constant emotional sustenance from his own wife, Mrs. Ramsay who provided him with emotional boosting in his life. Though she belonged to the weaker sex, yet she always protected Mr. Ramsay from his emotional turmoil and added much to his morale by her constant moral support and admiration for him. She always assured him of his inherent genius, restored him from the nadir of his angst and sparked off his creative genius:

“Filled with her words, like a child who drops off satisfied, he said, at last, looking at her with humble gratitude, restored, renewed, that he would take a turn;” (Woolf 44)

This effort of Mrs. Ramsay's that bolsters the male ego is itself "an act of creation" (Hussey 218) as it restores Mr. Ramsay from his intellectual inertia. In this way Woolf has challenged and subverted the normative gender roles, regarding the passivity and ineffectuality of women, and exploded the patriarchal myth, regarding the self-reliance of men.

Moreover, at times Mr. Ramsay behaves like an infant with her [Mrs. Ramsay] and the husband-wife relation then takes the form of mother-child relation. Sometimes he appears to be more helpless and needier for Mrs. Ramsay than the real children of the Ramsay family. He eagerly wished that Mrs. Ramsay would confess her love for him once:

"Will you not tell me just for once that you love me?" (Woolf 134)

This expectation is really a childish one and shows how, at times, he acts just like one of the babies of the family. In this context the observation of Allyon Booth is worth quoting, "He [Mr. Ramsay] is at once a baby bird, all mouth, all appetite, insatiable". (141) Even after the death of Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay always sought emotional sustenance from Lily Briscoe, another woman. His "demand for sympathy" (Woolf 167) and "solace" (Woolf 167) from Lily Briscoe also undercut his image of an icon of masculinity and smack of his extreme insecurity.

Another conventional belief, associated with the myth of masculinity, is that men are the protectors of women. Literature down the ages has eulogized men as the protectors of women and literary masterpieces are replete with the feats of those men who protected and saved women from adverse situations. But this aspect of masculinity has been deconstructed by Woolf as here Mr. Ramsay has been presented as incapable of protecting even his own wife. Woolf writes, "...he could not protect her, and, when he reached the hedge, he was sad. He could do nothing to help her". (Woolf 71) Thus the normative role of men as the savior of women has been dismantled by Woolf. So, in a way Mr. Ramsay is more a human being than a 'Man'.

Furthermore, here Mr. Ramsay has not been presented by Woolf as one who has self-control and patience, two essential ingredients of an ideal masculine figure. On the contrary, he is subjected to the sudden fits of anger. During the dinner party when Mr. Augustus Carmichael "asked for another cup of soup" (Woolf 103), Mr. Ramsay became terribly angry as he loathed people eating when he had finished. Then he completely lost his self-control and behaved just like an animal:

“She saw his anger fly like a pack of hounds into his eyes, his brow, and she knew that in a moment something violent would explode...”

(Woolf 104)

This sudden outburst of anger and lack of self-control also differentiates him from the mythic masculine icons.

Thus Virginia Woolf, living exclusively in the “wild zone”, (Showalter 341) that is far removed from the “cramped confines of the patriarchal space” (McCarty 368) has questioned the sexist ideology that holds masculinity on the high pedestal. The novelist here has shown that the image which patriarchy propagates of men is a parochial one, while in reality men share several behavioral aspects that are commonly associated with women. Indeed, here Woolf has intended to show that “hegemonic gender identities might well be a social consequences of dominant ideologies that shape [both] the male and female subjects” (Peach 131) (my insertion). Actually in *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf in her own unique way has highlighted that the issue of masculinity is just like using a mask on the part of males in the reveal show of life and Woolf in her own subtle way has torn this mask, exploded the ‘myth’ of masculinity in order to present man as a human being, not as a ‘Man’.

Works Cited

Booth, Allyson. “Mr. Ramsay, Robert Falcon Scott, and Heroic Death.” *Mosaic*. 40 (2007): 135-150. Print.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*. Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982. Print

Goring, Paul, Hawthorn, Jeremy, and Mitchell, Domhnall. *Studying Literature: The Essential Companion*. London: Hodder Education, 1st Pub 2001. Rpt 2008. Print..

Hussey, Mark, ed. *Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse*. New York: Mariners Press, 2005. Print.

Lee, Hermione. "To the Lighthouse: Complete Forms". *Virginia Woolf's To the lighthouse*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. Print.

McCarty, Mari. "Possessing Female Space: "The Tender Shoot"" *Women Studies* 8, 1981. Print.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics* (1969). London: Hart-Davis, 1971. Print

Mosse, George L. "Shell Shock as a Social Disease." *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000): 101-108. Print.

Peach, Linden. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000. Print.

Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist Criticism in Wilderness". *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Ed. David Lodge. Noida: Pearson, 1st Pub 2007. Rpt 2011. Print.

Tolan, Fiona. "Feminisms." *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. Noida: OUP. 1st Pub 2006. Rpt 2011. Print

Woolf, Virginia. *Moments of Being*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1985. Print.

———*To the Lighthouse*. London: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.

Multiple Voices in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": A Bakhtinian Reading

Hasina Wahida

Abstract: Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the theorists of twentieth century discourse propounded the concept of 'polyphony' or 'multiple voices' in literature. He, in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* probed into the innumerable voices present in the discourse and analysed the interplay within. What Bakhtin explicated in the field of prose, Eliot did in poetry. Eliot's poetry is a play of voices which are present and absent, communicate and yet dissolve into oblivion. Bakhtin observed that within a single perspective, there are multiple voices and perspectives. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", Eliot presents a series of voices which lend a new dimension and meaning to the text. The voices are in conflict, they play an important role in bringing out the real identity of Prufrock, who is not just a single individual, but every dilapidated modern man. This modern man suffers from the eternal confusion regarding existence and is pressed by the 'overwhelming question' of 'To be or not to be' like Shakespeare's Hamlet. My paper shall endeavor to decipher all those dimensions and provide a Bakhtinian reading.

Keywords: Polyphony, dialogism, action-inaction, death-in-life existence, time

It is a well-known observation that the job of the literary critic is to excavate underlying meanings and significance of a literary text. A text offers layers and layers of meanings and the author along with the text invites the readers and the critics to penetrate through the layers. Bakhtin observes that a text never ends, and has no sort of 'methodological closure'. A text is always essentially dialogic. It is constantly in conversation and is forming new wholes. To an obscure writer like T.S Eliot, language is an enigma; it presents a number of words and decorates the whole in ambiguity. As Bakhtin superbly hears "voices" everywhere (Gupta 51), so Eliot's

text is abound in “multiple voices” which are present and absent, communicate and yet dissolve into oblivion. My present paper shall attempt to provide a Bakhtinian reading of the multiple voices in T.S Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”.

Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the most important theorists of twentieth century discourse, in his reading of *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, enunciated the concept of ‘polyphony’ (multiple voices) or dialogism in literary theory –

The dialogical world is always in an intense relationship with another’s word, being addressed to a listener and anticipating a response. Because it is designed to produce a response, it has a combative quality (e.g. parody or polemic). It resists closure or unambiguous expression, and fails to produce a ‘whole’. It is consciousness lived constantly on the borders of other consciousnesses. (Robinson Andrew, “In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia”, web)

Critics strictly reject the view that a literary work can be monologic. It is a common observation that in a monologic work, the author or the narrator is the focal point; the author’s voice dominates the text and other voices are absent (or invisible). But interestingly, even if we take note of the dominant authorial voice or the narrator’s voice, we cannot deny the existence of the ‘reader’ whose voice is also incipient in the literary text. No text can claim to have a ‘closure’; it is always open-ended and the voices cannot limit themselves within their own bounds. As Gabor Bezeczky refers to Gary Saul Morson and Clay Emerson’s observation in their book *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*:

Bakhtin warns us...that neither individuals nor any other social entities are locked within their boundaries. They are extraterritorial, partly ‘located outside’ themselves. (“Contending Voices in Bakhtin” 335)

This sort of location ‘outside themselves’ invites plurality; we often find voice within a voice, character within a character. Gabor Bezeczky quotes Bakhtin while referring to the unity of the polyphonic novel –

The essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order than in a homophony. (“Contending Voices in Bakhtin” 335)

The author does not place his own narrative voice between the character and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert. It is thus as if the books were written by multiple characters, not a single author’s standpoint. Instead of a single objective world, held together by the author’s voice, there is plurality of consciousnesses, each with its own world. The reader does not see a single reality presented by the author, but rather, how reality appears to each character. (Robinson, web)

Though Bakhtin based his analysis basically on the polyphonic nature of a novel, its influence is all pervasive and reading Bakhtin in poetry is not an anomaly. Voices are widespread and contend with each other in T.S Eliot’s celebrated poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. It would not be an exaggeration on our part to call the poem a ‘play of voices’. In short, T.S Eliot discovers Bakhtin in the field of poetry through this poem.

The very title of the poem is ironic and ambiguous. Though the title suggests that the poem is a love lyric, we should not forget that T.S Eliot would write anything but a love song. This is quite evident as the poem begins. Voices are heard from the very first line which is an enigmatic and controversial line in the poem –

Let us go then you and I

The persons referred as ‘you’ and ‘I’ are not only two voices, but layers of possible ‘voices’ are embedded within the two pronouns ‘you’ and ‘I’. To begin with, we should first have a look at the epigraph taken from Dante’s *Inferno*. Count Guido da Montefeltro speaks the lines to Dante in Hell, wrongly conceiving him to be one of the damned, forever doomed in the fire of perdition. So the voices in the epigraph are those of Dante and Virgil. Taking cue from the epigraph as being set in Hell, Eliot’s poem can be said to be set in another ‘Inferno’ – the modern Inferno as we come across in Robert F. Fleissner’s article “Other Infernal Echoes: Prufrock and the Disgruntled Ghost of Joseph Conrad” :

That Prufrock represents modern inferno has been a critical commonplace because of the epigraph from the *Commedia*. The “yellow fog” for example, has been discussed as sulphurous, and the “you” and “I” have been said to refer to Dante and to Virgil... (*The Conradian* 6.3 22)

Considering the ‘you’ and ‘I’ to be Dante and Virgil, it is a journey through Hell. The ‘half-deserted streets’ and ‘one night cheap hotels’ then become alleyways and places in the dark caverns of Hell. All the ‘voices’ would then be ‘voices’ emerging from this deep gulf. The ‘you’, ‘I’, the voices of ‘women’ ‘Talking of Michelangelo’ would then be transmogrified into beings of that ‘infernal world’. Fleissner, in reanalyzing Eliot, even further says –

The subject of hell, to put it flatly, does not always, at least in itself, convince. My task now is to reconsider the likewise tempting suggestion that T.S Eliot was basing “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” in part on an infernal vision and possibly in more ways than his Dantescan epigraph would imply. (21)

Once we set the poem in Hell, not only the characters and the voices are transmogrified, ‘the overwhelming question’ also gets transformed. The ““Do I dare?”” and ““Do I Dare?”” is no longer the hesitation in confronting the supposed beloved (this analysis would be dealt with later in this article) in offering love; but becomes the question of life and death – this is indeed a poem of death-in-life existence in a modern inferno.

Now let us pick up Prufrock from Eliot’s supposed Inferno and reshape him again into the twentieth century modern man. Once we escape Dante’s ‘Inferno’, and change the setting, the poem gets metamorphosed and makes a second and different reading possible.

In ‘Let us go then you and I’, Prufrock appeals the supposed beloved to undertake some premeditated and preplanned journey. Prufrock speaks to the silent interlocutor. Unlike Browning’s dramatic monologue “My Last Duchess”, where the duke is the only speaker and the count’s envoy the silent interlocutor, T.S Eliot takes care to make us feel the presence of other innumerable characters and other voices as well. By referring to ‘half-deserted streets’ and ‘muttering retreats’, T.S Eliot evokes the possibility of unseen presences. It is the “voiceless voice” of these unseen and unheard presences that add to the intensity of the poem. Even,

Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intention

To lead you to an overwhelming question... (8-10)

cannot be ignored. The 'streets' following like 'tedious' argument of 'insidious' intent becomes animated voice tending towards some unresolved truth. ('overwhelming question'). According to Bakhtin, "The hero is the subject of a deeply serious, *real* dialogic mode of address" (Bezeczky 327, emphasis original) and Prufrock's following statement is an answer to the silent interlocutor and this clarifies the presence of that character, the silent 'real' presence in the poem.

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

Let us go and make our visit. (11-12)

In a Bakhtinian analysis, unheard presences are also part of a dialogue. Invisible presences pervade in 'Prufrock', but their unheard voices cannot be denied.

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo. (13-14)

Bakhtin points out that a Dostoevskian hero's "every experience, every thought... is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person" (Bezeczky 324). In 'Prufrock', Prufrock's glance is cast not only on the beloved, but also the other presences in the poem, which also influence Prufrock's every action. Again and again, Prufrock refers to these presences and his every move seems triggered by the movements of the unseen presences. Interestingly, these voices are unheard to the ear of the reader, but not to Prufrock, who can both see and hear them.

The voices become an integral part in the life of Prufrock. Each time he contemplates action, he takes care to note the response of the voices as he initiates into it –

(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")

My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin –

(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!)

(41-44)

Every time Prufrock contemplates action, the next moment he hesitates, because of the response he feels his action would induce in the surrounding voices. This leads to his procrastination like that of Hamlet. But Hamlet ultimately took impulsive action as he kills Polonius, mistaking him for Claudius; Prufrock fails to act, even impulsively.

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; (111)

In a dialogic text, even within a single perspective, there are multiple voices and perspectives. Prufrock is two selves in one. His is a split personality. The ‘I’ is in fact two voices – one is inert and passive, and the other an active self. The two selves are constantly in conflict with each other. While one self contemplates action, (“Let us go then you and I”), the other delays it –

There will be time, there will be time

To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet. (26-27)

Bakhtin, while analyzing the catharsis that finalized Dostoevsky’s novels, observes that “*nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future, and will always be in the future*”. (*Comparative Literature* 46.4 330, henceforth *CL*)

Thus, the past holds no place in the world of Prufrock. It is the future which is the immediate and the only reality. Bezczyk once again quotes Bakhtin and regards –

... according to Bakhtin, “Dostoevsky always represents a person *on the threshold* of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, at an unfinalizable – and *unpredeterminable* – turning point for his soul”. (*CL* 331)

Prufrock is always on the 'threshold' of his final decision – he is moving towards 'an overwhelming question' and realizes that if he should act, he should act now. Delay in action would reverse the entire order –

Do I dare

Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse. (45-48)

The relationship between Dostoevsky's heroes and their ideas is closely linked to Prufrock and his voice.

... The image of the hero is inseparably linked with the image of an idea, and cannot be detached from it. The idea has "taken control of the deepest core of [the character's] personality". (CL 331)

The characters and their ideas are inseparably linked and this is evident in the description of the soft October night which is the dilemma of Prufrock. It evokes the image of a drowsy cat, lethargic and unwilling to act. The contemplated action ends in inaction. The night is the inanimate unheard voice speaking Prufrock's mental state and his inertia.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,

Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,

And seeing that it was a soft October night,

Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. (15-22)

Another dominant voice in the poem is the voice of 'time'. It recalls the metaphysical tradition of poetry of the seventeenth century where time is a malevolent and destructive force, the eternal enemy of love and youth. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is not an exception to it. Time has lulled the senses (Like a patient etherized upon a table) and it is the voice of time which is jerking Prufrock up from his inert and passive state. There are clear echoes from Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" where Marvell begins –

Had we but world enough and time,

This coyness, lady, were no crime

and, immediately after this, he is jerked out of his consciousness with a shudder because

But at my back I always hear

Time's winged chariot hurrying near

Prufrock is in a similar situation, where, while in his inert, passive state, he takes time for contemplation and the next moment he realizes how time is fleeting away, leaving no room for visions and revisions and not time enough to mask his approaching old age.

It would be worthwhile to reconsider the following lines –

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, "Do I dare?" and "Do I dare?"

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair –

(37-40)

A focus on the repetitive use of "Do I dare?" brings us closer to two voices co-existing at the same time. While the first is assertive and tries to imbibe confidence in order to undertake the

action, the second “Do I dare?” is quite doubtful. This voice hesitates and resists the attempt of the first – “Time to turn back and descend the stair”. Bezczy notes –

... unfinalizability and coexistence, Bakhtin’s two favourite categories are not compatible; their relationship is paradoxical.... Bakhtin implicitly and explicitly allows both simultaneity and sequentiality and, what is more important, implicitly and explicitly denies both simultaneity and sequentiality. (331)

A dialogical world offers multiple perspectives and each of these perspectives could be true and equally valid. The different perspectives presented are not “partial, complementary truths. Rather, the dynamic interplay and interruption of perspectives is taken to produce new realities and new ways of seeing. It is incommensurability which gives dialogue its power” (Robinson, web). James C. Haba in “ ‘Till Human Voices Wake Us and We Drown’ Community in ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ ” has provided an interesting observation in which he presents the possibility of the reader being the addressee in the poem. The ‘you’ who is addressed to by Prufrock in the first line of the poem is actually every reader in general, who is reading the poem.

If the “you” could be real and, in fact, at the moment of reading could be each of us, then perhaps the “Love” of “love Song” could be something more than ironic. For, if each of us is the “you” spoken to, and if we acknowledge that identity, then Prufrock has, in some way, reached out and touched us; he has communicated (effected communion) with someone beyond himself. (*Modern Language Studies* 7.1 54-55)

In considering the ‘you’ to be ‘us’ the reader, the words of Prufrock are spoken to us, and in hearing them, we are listening to them. We, therefore, become the recipient silent voice in the poem. But the effect produced is somewhat tragic, because though Prufrock raises a wakeup call in the beginning of the poem, we fail to respond to it and though Prufrock’s voice reaches us, we fail to reach to Prufrock, to resolve his dilemma, the split he is in. that is why, perhaps, the journey meditated is not ultimately undertaken –

I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. (73-74)

T.S Eliot places us in an 'Unreal City' (*The Waste Land*, 60), where every human being is devitalized, fragmented, living a death-in-life existence, where the tragedy of human life is his failure to communicate. Modern life disrupts all chords that bind one to the other.

In listening to Prufrock we are perhaps beginning to hear a human voice, and to hear a human voice may be to admit and to realize, for a moment, our own humanness. In other words, to hear a human voice may be to live; but perhaps, as seems inevitable with Eliot, to live is in some sense also to die. (Haba 55)

As the reader is not one, but many, they represent a plural perspective, plurality of voices. The 'you' is therefore many voices taken together. "Even within a single perspective there are always multiple voices and perspectives" (Robinson). These multiple voices and perspectives conglomerate to produce the 'you'. Just as the 'I' in Prufrock is an assimilation of two selves and denote a split, so the 'you' is a unified whole of many heterogeneous voices:

For Bakhtin, dialogism characterizes the entire social world. Authentic human life is an open-ended dialogue. The world thus merges into an open-ended, multi-voiced dialogical whole. (Robinson, web)

What Prufrock sees around him, the voices that he hears, are not tangible human realities. They are phantasmagoric, Prufrock's dream vision or suppositions of a nightmare. If 'you' is the reader, then they are not only silent objects, but also invisible and unheard voices. So are the women 'Talking of Michelangelo' or commenting on Prufrock's physical decrepitude. Their existence is prominent, yet blurred; they are present, yet absent; they talk, yet are silent. The only heard voice in the poem is that of Prufrock. All others exist and yet cease to exist.

In a dialogic text there is plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world. There is no single truth, but each one and every one can be true and valid. Therefore another possibility cannot be brushed aside or ignored in the reading of "Prufrock". It is quite possible that the voice of Prufrock is the only voice in the poem, both heard and unheard, visible and invisible. We have already analyzed the the dual personality of Prufrock – that Prufrock is two selves in one; one inert, persona enveloped in inaction and the other an active persona,

resisted by the inactive one. In addition to these two selves or existences, we may go a step ahead and consider that the other voices – ‘you’, women ‘Talking of Michelangelo’, voices of ‘muttering retreats’, voices in ‘sawdust restaurants’ and ‘one night cheap hotels’, voices observing and ridiculing Prufrock’s old age – (They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”), are not separate, subjective realities surrounding Prufrock; they are voices arising out of the inner consciousnesses of Prufrock. They are voices representing the tumult, the anxiety, dilemma in the psychological mind of Prufrock. It is very much like James Thomson’s *The City of Dreadful Night* which “presents a representative picture of the dreariness and inhumanity of the modern city, which is both a ‘city of the mind’ and a phantasmagoric evocation of London” (Jain 9)

If Prufrock is one entity absorbing all the other entities, then can we call it a monological discourse? As already stated earlier, no writing is essentially monologic by nature. Human mind is amenable to multiple standpoints – it is the dark unconscious which reigns, but the conscious mind speaks.

Considering that all the perspectives are present in Prufrock, then Prufrock is both ‘you’ and ‘I’. It is the one self speaking to the other. Such an assumption brushes aside the conventional concept of the ‘you’ being the beloved or the imagined lady love of Prufrock. The analysis then takes a different turn and the poem becomes a portrayal of psychological conflict with the poet struggling to unify the opposite polarities and attempting a reconciliation of the otherwise opposite consciousnesses. When ‘you’ and ‘I’ both is Prufrock, then the fragmented realities or dissociative voices are coming together to form a unified whole. In asking the ‘you’ to go with the ‘I’, one voice is perhaps trying to bring the other reluctant voice to an agreement, to reconcile the split state and settle the tumult or the angst within.

The literary text is a creation of the author and therefore the authorial voice is very crucial and important. But the author cannot exist in absence of a perceptive reader. It is the conjoined effort of the author and the reader that lends meaning to the text and adds to its liveliness. Mary Judwik in her article “Towards an Ethics of Answerability: Reconsidering Dialogism in Sociocultural Literary Research” observes that ‘the ongoing process of authorship entails participation in what Bakhtin called a chain of utterances’ (545) and quotes Anne H. Dyson in this regard –

As authors, [students] must learn that, no matter how much they revise and edit their texts (and despite the importance of those tasks), they can never “own” meaning, because meaning only exists in the *meeting* of voices. So authors never have the last word, just (hopefully) a good turn that furthers or deepens an ongoing conversation. (*College Composition and Communication* 55.3 545)

As the author can never “own” meaning, because meaning exists in the “meeting” of voices, it is undeniably true that in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, the ‘I’ (if the author), achieves meaning only when he meets the ‘you’ (the reader). The author is then inviting the reader in his journey to the ‘overwhelming question’, the angst of every modern man who lead a death-in-life existence in general, and Prufrock in particular.

Ken Hirschkop in his article “Is Dialogism for Real?” points out that Bakhtin will argue that “an exchange or interaction of positions is possible even in the absence of the formal written or verbal structure of dialogue, that the single work and even the single utterance may embody such an exchange by being, as he says, “double-voiced” or “double-directed”. By this Bakhtin means that a single utterance or statement may contain two, in principle, separable meanings: “two socio-linguistic consciousnesses”, as he puts it “come together and fight it out on the territory of the utterance”. (*Social Text* 30 104)

Finally, as the reader undertakes his journey, he too, is confronted with another ‘overwhelming question’ – Does Prufrock really exist? A dialogical text avoids “authorial finality”(Robinson) and therefore keeping in mind the disrupted state of human consciousness in the twentieth century world, we may conclude that Prufrock is no tangible human form, but a state, an intangible form of the devitalized, demoralized, dehumanized modern man, presenting the angst within him, his death-in-life existence – “Do I dare/ Disturb the universe?”. Prufrock represents a voice which is the voice of every devitalized modern man; an inert, passive psychological state, which sometimes expresses itself as a human persona – the ‘I’ for instance, and sometimes through other unrealized, formless, abstract presences like the evening in a “soft October night”.

To conclude, T.S Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is an excellent artifact in its portrayal of not only the fragmented life of a modern man, but also in its evocation of the

“voices” that lies within the unrealized self. It is not Prufrock’s “human voices”, but Eliot’s multidimensional multiple voices that “wake us” as “we drown” plunging into Bakhtin’s world of dialogism.

Works Cited

- Bezczky, Gabor. “Contending Voices in Bakhtin”. *Comparative Literature* 46.4 (Autumn. 1994): 321-345.*JSTOR*.Web. 5 March 2013.
- Fleissner, Robert F. “Other Infernal Echoes: Prufrock and the Disgruntled Ghost of Joseph Conrad”. *The Conradian* 6.3(Sept. 1981): 21-25.*JSTOR*.Web. 5 March 2013.
- Gupta, L.N. *Modern Literary Discourses: Critical Studies in Yeats, Eliot and Lawrence*. Kolkata: Sarat Book Distributors, 2006. Print.
- Haba, James C. “Till Human Voices Wake Us and We Drown” Community in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. *Modern Language Studies* 7.1(Spring. 1977): 53-61.*JSTOR*.Web. 5 March 2013.
- Hirschkop, Ken. “Is Dialogism for Real?” *Social Text* 30(1992): 321-345.*JSTOR*.Web. 5 March 2013.
- Jain, Manju. *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S Eliot*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012. Print.
- Judwik, Mary. “Towards an Ethics of Answerability: Reconsidering Dialogism in Sociocultural Literary Research”. *College Composition and Communication* 55.3(Feb.2004): 536-567.*JSTOR*.Web. 5 March 2013.
- Robinson, Andrew. “In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia”. *Ceasefire Magazine*. Friday N.pag. Web. 3 March 2013. <http://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>

Identity in Harold Pinter: An Existentialist Exploration of Deborah's Trauma in *A Kind of Alaska*

Basudeb Chakrabarti

Abstract: The paradigm shift in reassessing identity that was initiated by Kant's "reflective judgment", gained impetus both from Nietzsche's problematizing the concept of value and Bergson's revolutionizing the notions of time and space. Modernism emerged primarily on the basis of these and such other philosophical foundations. With the simultaneous inputs of the Existentialists' the issue of identity, by and large, came to be constructed not in terms of Aristotle's *zoon politicon*, but in Pinter's words, in terms of a flux of "essence" and "scum" (*The Dwarfs*). This is Strindberg's "distinct individuality" as opposed to "types", Pirandello's "self"/"mask", Ionesco's "evanescence"/"opacity", Sartre's "authenticity"/"unauthenticity" and the like.

The present paper focuses particularly on Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* (1982) to chart the matrix of Deborah's psychosomatic/ontological trauma. In doing so I would take into account relevant accounts of the neurologist Oliver Sacks as delineated in *Awakenings*. And in interpreting Deborah's identity crisis à la Existentialism I would refer to certain thinkers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre and Beauvoir. Also since Deborah's groping for her selfhood entails spatiotemporal nuances the paper would draw upon theories related to time and space as evinced by Bergson and Proust. I would and it goes without saying

refer to some other works of Pinter to show how Deborah's individuation holds a unique place in the Pinter-canon per se.

Keywords: Identity, Selfhood, Essence, Scum, Ontological Trauma, Existentialism

“... Occasionally, I believe I perceive a little of what you are but that's pure accident. Pure accident on both our parts, the perceived and the perceiver. It's nothing like an accident, it's deliberate, it's a joint pretence. We depend on these accidents, on these contrived accidents, to continue. It's not important then that it's conspiracy or hallucination. What you are, or appear to be to me, or appear to be to you, changes so quickly, so horrifyingly, I can't keep up with it and I'm damn sure you can't either.... You're the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections? Whose reflections? Is that what you consist of? What scum does the tide leave? What happens to the scum? When does it happen?... What have I seen, the scum or the essence?” (Pinter *Plays: One* 100)

The labyrinth of the “scum” and the “essence”, that enmeshes identity, bewilders Len in Harold Pinter's *The Dwarfs* (1960) and this also constitutes the basis of Pinter's foray into selfhood in plays ranging from *The Room* (1957) to *Remembrance of Things Past* (2000). This flux of “scum” and “essence” also points to the rejection of all presumptions that translate reality as something forever immutable. “A moment is sucked away and distorted” says Pinter, “often even at the time of its birth.” (x) Thus in Pinter, we are in the world of Samuel Beckett's *Watt* (1945) examining the fall of sand, or in that of *Endgame* (1957), where “Something is [continuously] taking its course” (Beckett *Complete Works* 98). As in Luigi Pirandello, the great enemy to Pinter is the label that fixes truth in a straitjacket: “We don't carry labels on our chests, and even though they are continually fixed to us by others, they convince nobody” (Pinter *Plays: One* ix). Consequently, in Pinter, the search for one's identity stems from a subjective exploration for that

shifting, elusive and yet very real point where something may be ascertained, a point between the incompatible areas of the namable and the unnamable:

My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of autobiographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore (xii).

These words of Pinter, apart from expanding the frontiers of drama in a crucial way by inviting us to examine characters who do not necessarily provide information about their backgrounds and motives which we, as audience, customarily felt were a must to extract the maximum dramatic impact from a given scene, serves yet another purpose of the playwright. The dramatic idiom that Pinter drives at carries us most certainly beyond a Pirandellian concern about the flux of life; it rather voices a more explicit probing into the nuances of identity in terms that reminds us, for instance, of R. D. Laing's observations about the "ontologically secure person". Laing states:

A man may have a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person. As such, he can live out into the world and meet others: a world and others experienced as equally real, alive, whole, and continuous. Such a basically ontologically secure person will encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological, from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people's reality and identity. It is often difficult for a person with such a sense of his integral selfhood and personal identity, of the permanency of things, of the reliability of natural processes, of the substantiality of natural processes, of the substantiality of others, to transpose himself into the world of an individual whose experiences may be utterly lacking in any unquestionable self-validating certainties (Laing 39).

Pinter's characters are always lacking in such "unquestionable self-validating certainties" and by extension, we all are. Hence in *The Caretaker* (1959), for example, Davies has to create the "myth of the impossible journey to Sidcup" and the play represents this "simply as a form of self-deception and grotesque evasion on Davies' part" (Esslin *Absurd* 249). Accordingly in Pinter the quicksand of security coalesces into defining identity as a phenomenon of ontology, such that its collapse represents a loss of being or Existential annihilation. The individual in

Pinter do not adhere to the “result of social configurations” but strives to formulate and retain an “original potential” (Jaspers 30). Concomitantly, a dissolution of identity occurs when one “aspire[s] to be nothing at all – in order to become the public” (Kierkegaard 64).

What is known as the “*Das Man*” factor in Martin Heidegger is also relevant in understanding Pinter’s stance regarding the problematics of identity (Heidegger 164). If Heidegger’s “absorption [of the individual] in the publicness of the ‘they’” connotes a position of “fallenness”, in Pinter the same is perceived as loss of identity (220). Attainment of selfhood in Pinter refers to that mode of existence which surmounts the “inauthentic everydayness” of life to be Existentially free (361). The collapse of the selves in characters like Rose of *The Room* (1957) or Stanley of *The Birthday Party* (1958) can hence be ascribed to what Kierkegaard calls, “their bloodless indolence” (Kierkegaard 64) whereas Albert of *A Night Out* (1959) or Ruth of *The Homecoming* (1964) or Jimmy of *Party Time* (1992) can be seen as exerting their “individual will[s]” to uncover all “stratagems” of “nakedness” to grasp their real selves (Pinter *Plays: One* xiii).

In accordance with such an Existentialist perception of identity is Pinter’s bid to deal with “characters at the extreme edge of their living, where they are living pretty much alone” as he stated in an interview to Kenneth Tynan way back in 1960 (Esslin *Pinter* 26). For it is only when one is made to face the angst of acute loneliness that one is forced to choose a course that either leads to self-deception, to what Jean-Paul Sartre calls “*mauvaise foi*” or liberates one into “unconditioned freedom” (Sartre *Being and Nothingness* 48, 94). Hence in Pinter construction of identity necessarily relies upon “throwing characters into predicaments to see whether they can sink or swim” (Baker 71).

A Kind of Alaska (1982) imbibes all these preoccupations of Pinter and also develops upon them in more than one sense. The play was inspired by *Awakenings* (1973), a medical book written by the distinguished neurologist Oliver Sacks providing clinical accounts of twenty patients who were struck by a mysterious sleeping sickness, called encephalitis lethargica, between 1916 and 1927 and were called back to life through treatment with the new drug L-Dopa, fifty years later. Pinter’s indebtedness to this book is evident from the fact that he takes up Sack’s clinical report on the case of a woman patient, Rose R., who had received the L-Dopa treatment and dramatizes the crucial and painful moment of her return to full consciousness. In doing so Pinter fully internalizes all the clinical information provided in *Awakenings* and

assimilates them with his own ontological perception of one's coming to experience the abysmal gap between the known and the unknowable. Placed at the "edge between the sand and the stars", to use Saint-Exupéry's phrase, Pinter's Deborah gropes for her identity standing precisely at such a juncture in life where she finds that her chronological age is at an overwhelming variance with her psychological age (Exupéry 39). And in the course of the play's action this is what Hornby, the doctor, tells Deborah: "You have been asleep for a very long time. You have now woken up. ... You are older although you do not know that. You are still young, but older (Pinter *Plays: Four* 309).

For twenty nine years Deborah had been in a limbo state, between life and death, sleep and awakening, during which her mind, as her doctor explains, "has not been damaged. It was merely suspended, it took up a temporary habitation...in a kind of Alaska" (336). The image Pinter evokes here has clear reverberations in similar images of isolation that we come across in his memory plays. He has often presented people visualizing themselves in a sound-proof, empty space, surrounded by darkness, stillness, silence. It may not be irrelevant here to mention that Robert Shaw's play *The Man in the Glass Booth* (1967), which Pinter directed for the stage in 1967, closes with the striking visual image of a man shutting himself up in a sound-proof glass enclosure. The same idea was recaptured in *Family Voices* (1980) where the mother's vision of a closed, dark, cold and silent space, in which she sits in isolation, and the father's desolate state in his "glassy grave" are indeed variations of the same limbo state (Pinter *Plays: Three* 301). Deborah's relapse into this state, after she has regained consciousness, is the climax of all those similar, awe-inspiring experiences described by earlier Pinter characters:

DEBORAH: Yes, I think they're closing in. they are closing the walls in. Yes. *She bows her head, flicking faster, her fingers now moving about over her face.* Oh ... well ... oooohhhh ... oh no ... oh no ... *During the course of this speech her body becomes hunch-backed.* Let me out. Stop it. Let me out. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Shutting the walls on me. Shutting them down on me. So tight, so tight. Something panting, something panting. Can't see. Oh, the light is going. The light is going. They're shutting up shop. They're closing my face. Chains and padlocks. Bolting me up. Stinking. The smell. Oh my goodness, oh dear, oh my goodness, oh dear, I'm so young. It's a vice. I'm in a vice. It's at the back of my neck. Ah. Eyes stuck. Only see the tip of my nose. Eyes stuck. (Pinter *Plays: Four* 340)

The agony of Existential angst could not have been better expressed than in these words of Deborah.

It is also of crucial importance to note that at this point of his career when Pinter was writing *A Kind of Alaska* he had come to the fullest comprehension of the memory techniques and internal exploration of characters and had chosen to settle with a dramatic idiom that perceived reality, to quote Marcel Proust, as “existing not outside but within ourselves” (Proust 262). The notion of past affecting present and present being in effect past had most certainly emerged from Pinter’s close study of Proust’s writings. In 1972 Pinter started working on *The Proust Screenplay* by which time he was already experimenting to conceive of a dramatic action in terms that expressed the Proustian concept of time as an indivisible continuum of past and present. As complementary to this sense of fluid time, Pinter might have been simultaneously encouraged to incorporate Henri-Louis Bergson’s concept of duration by which he saw reality as a continuous change in which the past is interfused with the present indivisibly, a conception that echoes in many of his plays as also in *Celebration* (1999):

SUKI: I sometimes feel that the past is never past.

RUSSEL: What do you mean?

JULIE: You mean that yesterday is today?

SUKI: That’s right. You feel the same, do you?

JULIE: I do. (Pinter *Celebration* 56)

In the earlier memory plays like *Landscape* (1967), *Silence* (1968) and *Old Times* (1970) the characters do not evolve from their past beings, they cohabit with them. Hence Anna and Kate in *Old Times* revert to the present tense when talking of their past friends Charley and Jake. The memories are either recaptured or obliterated while the characters find themselves submerged in a sort of temporal stasis. *No Man’s Land* (1974) that immediately precedes *The Betrayal* (1978) voices this stasis most unequivocally through Hirst’s laments: “No man’s land ... does not move ... or change ... or grow old ... remains ... forever ... icy ... silent” (Pinter *Plays: Four* 98). Construction of identity in such plays takes upon an added strategy of calling to life subjective mental images by the characters that either provide solidarity or fetch the doom of Existential annihilation. Thus in *Old Times* Anna’s remembering of Deeley “looking up her skirt”, is her attempt to consolidate her identity in terms of Deeley’s relationship with her which is, however, nullified and she made redundant the moment Kate “remember[s]” her to be actually

dead: “But I remember you. I remember you dead” (Pinter *Plays: Four* 67). In so “reforming and actualizing” the past that may or may not adhere to the historical reality, characters win or lose their respective battles against the threats of obliteration (Proust 262). It is this Proustian sense of coalesced time that is also present in Pinter’s study of Deborah’s process of individuation. For Deborah’s past is enshrined in her teenage experiences which have now come to cohabit with her present state of a matured woman. The stage space is consequently internalized in Deborah’s mind where the childhood consciousness jostles with her need to acknowledge the implications brought upon by the chronological advancement in years – “the trauma of paralysis is replaced by the trauma of apparently instantaneous ageing” (Batty 85). The action of the play in arresting Deborah at such a point where she has to be a recipient to information and construct her own values, places upon her the excruciating agony of Existential choice. And her angst is created, to draw upon Simon de Beauvoir’s thinking, precisely because of the “contingency” factor that is concomitant to her “project” of identity construction, it is a matter of Deborah’s “knowing” whether she “wants to live and under what conditions” (Beauvoir 15).

Interestingly while Pinter is constantly and keenly aware of Deborah’s feminine nature as an adolescent, he becomes less revealing when he perceives her as a grown-up woman. The real Rose R of Oliver Sacks disclosed to her doctor in a moment of mental clarity that “she can’t really imagine what it’s like being older than twenty-one, because she has never really experienced it” (Sacks 87). Sacks continues:

For most of the time, however, there is ' nothing, absolutely nothing, no thoughts at all ' in her head , as if she is forced to block off an intolerable and insoluble anachronism – the almost half-century gap between her age as felt and experienced (her ontological age) and her actual or official age. (87)

Pinter’s Deborah who is five years younger than Rose R, is however made to feel much more acutely the gap between her stultified adolescent consciousness and the claims of her advanced chronological age. Pinter not only perceives her as a mere human being awakening to the absurd but also as combining an ageing body with a young and immature personality that is groping to reconcile “ontological” and “official” age. There is in fact a characteristic point in the play when Deborah notices her sister Pauline’s breasts and then automatically, takes a look at her own body. But she cannot grasp the meaning of her own body’s physiological change. Her womanhood is an unknown state for her. Her feminine features are nevertheless secondary to

Pinter since his *Deborah* is focusing on the more imminent questions concerning man's tragic fate in a world of contingency and absurdity. The Sartrean proposition that "existence precedes essence" is tellingly applicable to Deborah who after waking up from her comatose state first "materializes", "encounters" herself and then goes on to "define" her being. To begin with she is "nothing" and she will "not be anything until later" and then she will be what she "makes of" herself (Sartre *Existentialism is Humanism* 22). Hornby and Pauline, speaking in terms of Sartrean Existentialism, are thus functional characters who help Deborah encounter her "facticity" (Sartre *Being and Nothingness* xv). Her "thrownness" (Heidegger 174) is her being there in the world entailing a "confrontation of her reality with the realities of those who have cared for her" (Batty 84). And as Deborah starts to untangle "lies from truths to understand who she is in order to situate herself within the context of her family and the world", she undertakes the process of creating her "essence", her identity (Prentice 267). Aptly writes Penelope Prentice in this connection:

A whole view of human nature presents itself in this brief play, one that sees this girl/woman child frozen into an adolescence yet already in possession of a full spectrum of adult human feelings, desires, and purpose, but within such narrow confines her quest will be limited to sorting out who she is, hampered by the aftermath of her disease and encroaching side effects of the drug. The choices she makes show that she selects what is least repellent and most attractive from among the lies and truths she had been told, constructing yet a third reality for herself, that is no longer a dream but an awakening (Prentice 268).

Martin Esslin suggests that "the play ends with Deborah finally accepting her new reality" (Esslin *Pinter* 205). Irving Wardle similarly says that "she [i.e. Deborah] recapitulates the information and states that she has it 'in proportion'" (Wardle 17). Both Esslin and Wardle see Deborah as a conformist who evades the Existential choice by letting others do that for her. She merely complies. What both critics fail to see and what constitutes the dramatic point of the play is that Deborah, in this moment of extreme mental concentration and clarity, does not merely recapitulate factual and documented information but goes on to form her subjective reality – the only one that her psychological state will permit her to accept. And herein lies the essence of her individuation. She has already firmly stated that "I certainly have no intention of looking into a mirror" (Pinter *Plays: Four* 341). Her last speech in the play, which follows

immediately after this declaration, illustrates fully the mechanism of her mind as it chooses to turn from the doctor's dry factual truth to a final endorsement of her sister's sentimentalized information:

DEBORAH: You say I have been asleep. You say I am now awake. You say I have not awoken from the dead. You say I was not dreaming then and am not dreaming now. You say I am a woman. *She looks at PAULINE, then back to HORNBY.* She is a widow. She doesn't go to her ballet classes any more. Mummy and Daddy and Estelle are on a world cruise. They've stopped off in Bangkok. It'll be my birthday soon. I think I have the matter in proportion. *Pause.* Thank you. (Pinter 342)

Deborah here makes her own selection from the facts presented to her and pieces them together to make her own mythic reality, the only one by which she can survive. Placed between what Sartre calls "the ontological duality" (Sartre *Being and Nothingness* 49) of herself in the eyes of others and her real self, she transcends from the state of "*l'être-en-soi*" to "*l'être-pour-soi*" (Sartre lxiii, 269) by choosing to construct a "third reality for herself", a position that makes Deborah "a mystery, an enigma, a sphinx" insulated to all the socio-cultural expectations heaped on her by Hornby and Pauline (Hall 90). Like Gaston in Jean Anouilh's *Traveller Without Luggage* (1937), Deborah refuses to accept the identity that others are constructing for her and in doing so finalizes her "existential education" (Hall 89). Hence the fading of the lights at Deborah's dignified and moving final "thank you" does not merely bring to close Deborah's "anguish" (Sartre *Being and Nothingness* 35), but it also catapults us into acknowledging that "man is nothing other than what he makes of himself" (Sartre *Existentialism is Humanism* 22).

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Pinter, Harold. *Plays: One*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

Pinter, Harold. *Plays: Two*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

Pinter, Harold. *Plays: Three*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

Pinter, Harold. *Plays: Four*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

Pinter, Harold. *Celebration and The Room*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000. Print.

Secondary Sources:

- Baker, William and Stephen Ely Tabachnick. *Harold Pinter*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973. Print.
- Batty, Mark Taylor. *Harold Pinter*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2010. Print.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Citadel, 1976. Print.
- Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986. Print.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Watt*. New York: Grove Press, 1953. Print.
- Dukore, Bernard F. *Harold Pinter*. London: Macmillan, 1982. Print.
- Esslin, Martin. *Pinter the Playwright*. London: Methuen, 2000. Print.
- , *The Theatre of the Absurd*. London: Methuen, 2001. Print.
- Exupery-Saint, Antoine de. *Wind, Sand and Stars*. Trans. William Rees. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.
- Hall, Ann C. *A Kind of Alaska: Women in the Plays of O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993. Print.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1962. Print.
- Jaspers, Karl. *Philosophy*. Trans E. B. Ashton. Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. Print.
- Kane, Leslie, ed. *The Art of Crime: The Plays and Films of Harold Pinter and David Mamet*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Kierkegaard, Sören. *The Present Age*. Trans. Alexander Dru. New York: Harper and Row, 1962. Print.
- Liang, R. D. *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990. Print.
- Prentice, Penelope. *The Pinter Ethic*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2002. Print.
- Proust, Marcel. *The Past Recaptured*. Trans. Andreas Mayor. New York: Random House Inc., 1971. Print.
- Raby, Peter, ed. *Harold Pinter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.
- Sacks, Oliver. *Awakenings*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956. Print.

---, *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Trans. Carol Macomber. London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print.

Wardle, Irving. "Clash of Past and Future". *The Times*. 15 October 1982. Print.

Fear: A Major Catalyst in Pinter's *'The Birthday Party'*

Soumya Mukherjee

Abstract: The dramatic pieces known as “absurdist plays” are called such because they make the audience face the absurdity of our existence. The fact that there is nothing certain in this world but death makes man question his own existence. And this feeling of absurdity creates a fear that we hardly realise - the fear of the unknown, the fear of being no more, or the fear of becoming someone or something else, just like Stanley in Pinter's *The Birthday Party*.

This paper deals with the history of the absurd and how fear is at the root of the feeling of absurdity. Since man has lost his faith in a benevolent omnipotence, it creates an unfathomable void which provokes man to think about the necessity of his own existence. The fact that we cannot know about the workings of this universe (which is not controlled by a benevolent God) creates a sense of fear which is explored by Pinter in *The Birthday Party*.

The paper shows how Pinter gradually builds up the “fearful symmetry” of the play by unfolding about the two men in black van with a wheelbarrow with themselves, and how they are looking for someone. Fear generates the tension of the play by showing the ruthless interrogation of Stanley and the terrifying game of ‘blind man's buff’ and at last the taking away of Stanley in spite of Petey's futile attempts to prevent it. Thus Pinter drives home the message that in this alien universe no one is safe from the external forces whose workings we hardly understand.

Keywords: Absurd, Fear, Pinter, the Birthday Party

“I will show you fear in a handful of dust”

T. S. Eliot

This line from Eliot's *'The Waste Land'* is a reminder of physical mortality symbolized by ‘dust’, as the body disintegrates into dust after death. This fear, the fear of death, or, to be more specific, of returning to nothingness after the destruction of life, is a matter of concern to every living rational being. Fear is one of the most powerful instincts of any man and it is also one of the most disturbing of feelings. Here we shall be discussing the background of the fear that plays an important part in the rise of a certain type of drama which Martin Esslin famously labels as

“Absurd” and then we shall investigate the workings of fear in a well-known Absurd play and try to find out the mechanism of fear that leads to the disastrous finale.

Albert Camus was the first person to expound the notion of the ‘absurd man’ in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1947). In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was the son of Aeolus, the king of Thessaly. He was punished by Hades for his crime of imprisoning the god of Death. Sisyphus was forced to push a large rock up a steep hill. As he reached the top the rock rolls all the way down and his task began again and this punishment was for ever. For Camus this is the condition of the absurd man. The first lines of *The Myth of Sisyphus* pose an existential question that is hard to answer:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. (Camus 11)

This disillusioned attitude to life has its own history of events. Every age finds a potential threat to its social and metaphysical aspects and twentieth century encountered a great one which shook it to its very core. The increasing awareness that the existence of life on the face of the earth is just a chemical accident and not the result of divine will made the intellectuals of the time question our own existence. The philosopher Frederic Nietzsche pronounced the death of God in 1883. There is no promise of a heaven and no threat of a hell in Nietzsche’s proclamation and thus the human actions become meaningless. As Martin Esslin puts it:

The decline of religious faith was masked until the end of the Second World War by the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism and various totalitarian fallacies. All this was shattered by the war. (Esslin 23)

In the absence of God, man suddenly feels that the core of his existence is hollow. With the death of God, life loses its meaning and man stands face to face with the unanswerable ‘why’ of his own existence. This fear of metaphysical unknowability and its absurdity are explored by Camus in the following words:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (Camus 13)

The fear that haunts the characters of the Theatre of the Absurd can be traced back to the historical events of the time. Many characters of the Absurd theatre inhabit a world gripped by fear or a seemingly post-apocalyptic world with an acute sense of their own mortality running through their veins. The atomic bombs that fell on Nagasaki and Hiroshima proved that the life of man has no value when confronted with the weapons of mass destruction created by man

himself and the benevolent divinity seems ineffective in front of the brutal power exercised by man upon its own race. This idea is terribly frightening as it pushes the fate of humankind into a void where there is no hope, no light and only the fear of being destroyed, being disintegrated into 'dust' or 'nothing'. Esslin opines that suddenly man comes face to face with a universe that is frightening and illogical, i.e. absurd.

As we see, the word 'absurd', according to Esslin, contains the sense of fear as well as of illogicality. Fear is "an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or harm" or "the likelihood of something unwelcome happening" (*Illustrated Oxford Dictionary*). This 'unpleasant emotion' is the key-ingredient of a number of absurd plays. We shall be discussing about the representation of fear in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and see how different elements contribute to the understanding of the fear that is communicated through the dialogues and actions of the characters.

2

In *The Birthday Party*, Pinter's first full-length play, fear is a very much active element, but the mode of its action is quite different from the Ionesco plays like *The Lesson* or *Rhinoceros*. As is common in many of the absurdist plays, language is, of course, the vector of fear, but it operates on a different plain as not only the articulated words but also the sudden silences play an important part to evoke an almost incomprehensible fear. Martin Esslin observes:

The starting point of Pinter's Theatre is ... a return to some of the basic elements of drama – the suspense created by the elementary ingredients of pure, preliterate theatre: a stage, two people, a door : a poetic image of an undefined fear and expectation. When asked by a critic what his two people in his room are afraid of, Pinter replied, 'Obviously they are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room there is a world bearing upon them which is frightening. I am sure it is frightening to you and me as well. (Esslin 235)

'Comedy of Menace' is a term associated with the early plays of Pinter. The term implies an uneasy laughter from the audience who feel that there is at least a safe distance between themselves and the happenings on the stage. In fact, 'menace' is strengthened by the fear of people that something dangerous might spring from any unexpected corner at any point of time. Stanley, who stays at the boarding house of Petey and Meg and leads an almost mother-son relationship with Meg (so intense that it verges on the level of the incestuous), is living happily having himself cut off from the outer world. He terrifies Meg with his description of men who will come in a van:

Stanley: And do you know what they've got in that van?

Meg: What?

Stanley: They've got a wheelbarrow in that van.

Meg: (breathlessly) They haven't.

Stanley: Oh yes they have.

Meg: You're a liar!

Stanley: (advancing upon her): A big wheelbarrow. And when the van stops they wheel it out, and they wheel it up the garden path, and then they knock at the front door.

Meg: They don't.

Stanley: They're looking for someone.

Meg: They're not.

Stanley: They're looking for someone. A certain person.

Meg: (hoarsely) No, they're not!

Stanley: Shall I tell you who they're looking for?

Meg: No!

Stanley: You don't want me to tell you?

Meg: You're a liar! (*The Birthday Party* 34)

Even though the audience may laugh at the tension of Meg on such a trivial matter, Pinter's deliberate use of the elements of Western Mafia movies – the arrival of men on a mission, a big and mysterious car, and search for a particular Mr Somebody etc. – proves that there is of course something to be worried about. There is a tendency to take Goldberg and McCann as metaphorical figures – they are taken to be representatives of an external higher power and they are also symbolic of the fear emerging from Stanley's Unconscious. Katherine Worth suggests:

Pinter brilliantly conveys the suggestion that the inquisitors are unreal beings, a projection of Stanley's obscure dread, without quite destroying the possibility of their being taken as real; this is what makes them so alarming. (37)

Antonin Artaud in his celebrated work *The Theater and Its Double* writes, "We cannot go on prostituting the idea of theatre whose only value is in its excruciating, magical relation to *reality and danger*." (Artaud 89)[My italics] Reality is often dangerous in the plays of the absurd, *The Birthday Party* not being an exception. It is clear that Stanley has a shadowy past. What he did is never stated clearly, but from the words of Goldberg and McCann it is evident that there was a betrayal from Stanley's part- he betrayed the 'Organization', whatever that means. But Stanley's

anxiety of the two strangers shows that he is really afraid of them and he tries to cover his fear with the mask of arrogance. He behaves rudely with McCann and Goldberg in their first meeting but is overcome by the exhibition of power from them. The silences and gestures rather than the words communicate to the audience the unease and tension of the situation.

Stanley: I'm sorry. I'm not in the mood for a party tonight.

McCann: Oh, is that so? I'm sorry.

Stanley: Yes, I'm going out to celebrate quietly, on my own.

McCann: That's a shame.

[They stand.] (*The Birthday Party* 48)

Martin Esslin sums up the situation neatly –

Two sinister visitors, Goldberg and McCann want a room in Meg's boarding house. It soon becomes clear that they are after Stanley. Are they the emissaries of some secret organization he has betrayed? Or male nurses sent out to fetch him back to an asylum he has escaped from? Or emissaries from another world, like the blind Negro in *The Room*? This question is never answered. We see them merely organizing a birthday party for Stanley who insists that it is not his birthday, and brainwashing him in terrifying but nonsensical cross-examination. (Esslin 240)

Kafka, who influenced Pinter's writing career, presents a similar situation in his novel *The Trial* where two strangers come to arrest K., the protagonist. After having been accused of a number of unspecified crimes, K. tries to protest and establish his innocence.

... I'm accused of something but can't find the slightest guilt to justify an accusation. But that's a minor point. The main question is: who is accusing me? What authority is conducting these proceedings? Are you officials? (Kafka, p.9)

Unlike Stanley, K was completely innocent. But like Stanley, he fails to escape from the strange external forces which are not only mysterious but also terrifying. K's executioners even show him a strange kindness and politeness:

K. shivered involuntarily, which made the gentleman give him a gentle reassuring slap on the back. The gentlemen sat K. down, put him to lean against the boulder and rested his head on it. In spite of all their efforts and K.'s willing cooperation, his posture remained forced and improbable. (Kafka 177)

Goldberg's and McCann's treatment of Stanley at the end of the play is a reminder of the very much disturbing last moments of K in Kafka's novel. The stage direction mentions that "they begin to woo him, gently and with relish." (*The Birthday Party* 92)

There is an implied threat of physical violence as Stanley is alone against two dangerous men who also possess the secret knowledge of Stanley's past. The scene is more disturbing because of the lack of actual violence. As in Ionesco's *The Lesson*, the Pupil was paralyzed by the blows of verbal attack by the Professor, in *The Birthday Party* Stanley faces a likely situation. The Pupil is murdered by the Professor by a knife that is invisible and it becomes clear that the verbal knife is responsible for her death. But as no knife and no blood are shown on the stage, the fear operates on a metaphysical level.

Professor : Repeat, repeat: knife... knife... knife...

Pupil: I've got a pain... my throat, neck... oh, my shoulders... my breast... knife...

Professor: Knife... knife... knife...

Pupil: My hips... knife... my thighs... kni...

Professor: Pronounce it carefully... knife... knife...

Pupil: Knife... my throat...

.....

Professor [changing his voice]: Pay attention... don't break my window... the knife kills...

Pupil: [in a weak voice]: Yes, yes... the knife kills?

Professor [striking the Pupil with a very spectacular blow of the knife]: Aaah! That'll teach you! (*The Lesson* 74-5)

The murder of the Pupil almost reaches a ritualistic height as the Professor dances a 'scalp dance' around his victim. The interrogation of Stanley is also a situation where the verbal attacks pierce through Stanley's skin of arrogance and create a sense of extreme unease. In the interrogation scene, the storm of verbal assaults almost causes a breakdown of Stanley. Bill Naismith in his essay on *The Birthday Party* says:

The effect of the relentless barrage is nightmarish. The catalogue of crimes begins with references that an audience will immediately pick up from earlier in the play – his lethargy and his treatment of Meg, Petey and Lulu. Thereafter the questions and accusations become increasingly bizarre and improbable. McCann, the Irishman, focuses on the betrayal of 'the organisation', of Ireland and the Church; Goldberg concentrates on Stanley's family failings and his uncleanliness; but they also throw in questions that are unanswerable:

McCann: What about the Albigensienist heresy?

Goldberg: Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?

McCann: What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?

Goldberg: Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?

The force of the inquisition derives partly from the staccato form and the variety of non-stop detailed accusations, but also from the sheer aural assault where the rhythm produces a mental torture that breaks Stanley down. (Naismith 71-2)

The process of Stanley's mental breakdown has already been initiated as we see him scream and kick Goldberg in the height of mental pressure caused by the ruthless interrogation. The fear of being inescapably entrapped engulfs Stanley so much that he moves towards speechlessness at a very quick pace. The game 'Blind Man's Buff' achieves an almost macabre dimension as a mentally shattered Stanley tries to strangle Meg and rape Lulu. The blackout signifies the all-encompassing darkness that even Goldberg and McCann cannot escape. But this darkness probably inspires the dark desires of a mentally broken Stanley who can control them no more in his cornered state. Act Two ends with this ghastly description:

McCann finds the torch on the floor, shine it on the table and Stanley. Lulu is lying spread-eagled on the table, Stanley bent over her. Stanley, as soon as the torchlight hits him, begins to giggle. Goldberg and McCann move towards him. He backs, giggling, the torch on his face. They follow him upstage, left. He backs against the hatch, giggling. The torch draws closer. His giggle rises and grows as he flattens himself against the wall. Their figures converge upon him. (*The Birthday Party* 75-6)

Stanley's hysteric giggles prove that the rationality of the mind is completely destroyed by the fear to which he has already yielded. And the stage-image of the two sinister figures converging upon Stanley is indeed terrifying. It is the projection of unmixed fear on the stage – a fear that can only be experienced, not expressed. Fear becomes almost palpable here.

Everyone in the play feels an unease and fear at certain moments, even Goldberg and McCann are not exceptions. Like Ben and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter*, they are the one who are supposed to be in control of the situation. But sometimes the fear of the unknown grasps them. When Ben and Gus, two hired thugs, are stuck at the basement of a supposed restaurant, the two men become nervous because of the uncertainty of their current status. They have to please the people upstairs with delicious dishes to remain undiscovered at the basement, but they cannot cook as they have nothing with them to cook. The situation creates an unbearable tension for Gus.

Gus (passionately, advancing): What's he doing it for? We've been through our tests, haven't we? We got right through our tests, years ago, didn't we? We took them together, don't you remember, didn't we? We've proved ourselves before now, haven't we? We've always done our job. What's he doing all this for? What's the idea? What's he playing these games for? (*The Dumb Waiter* 162)

Goldberg and McCann, the sinister duo, provoke fear in others, but they themselves are not totally free from its clutches. At certain point Goldberg seems to be uncertain of himself. McCann, who is a man of a few words, is also shown to be a bit unnerved about this particular job.

Goldberg: McCann, what are you so nervous about? Pull yourself together. Everywhere you go these days it's like a funeral. (*The Birthday Party* 38)

McCann may seem nervous for a moment, but his attackingly advancing figure is a blood-chilling spectacle. In Act Three when Lulu comes and accuses Goldberg for having seduced her, McCann's interference is so violent that Lulu has no option but to flee.

McCann: Your sort, you spend too much time in bed.

Lulu: What do you mean?

McCann: Have you got anything to confess?

Lulu: What?

McCann: (savagely) Confess!

Lulu: Confess what?

McCann: Down on your knees and confess !

Lulu: What does he mean?

Goldberg: Confess. What can you lose?

Lulu: What, to him?

Goldberg: He's only been unfrocked six months.

McCann: Kneel down, woman, and tell me the latest!

Lulu: (retreating to the back door) I've seen everything that's happened. I know what's going on. I've got a pretty shrewd idea.

McCann: (advancing) I've seen you hanging about the Rock of the Cashel, profaning the soil with your goings-on. Out of my sight!

Lulu: I'm going.

[She exits.] (*The Birthday Party* 90-1)

Again the lack of actual physical violence constitutes the sense of fear which cannot be communicated by the projection of bloody scenes on the stage. The fear operates at a metaphysical level here. In Act Three, the accusing process of interrogation is reversed and the two figures from the external world begin to pamper Stanley and this is no less absurd and frightening than the accusations of the previous act.

Goldberg: We'll make a man of you.

McCann: And a woman.

Goldberg: You'll be re-oriented.

McCann: You'll be rich.

Goldberg: You'll be adjusted. (*The Birthday Party* 93)

Stanley had earlier tried to protest and defend himself from their accusations, but now he has become completely inarticulate, only uttering some unintelligible vague sounds. This transformation of Stanley from a rational, self-asserting man to a mere dumb, victimized puppet in the hands of the sinister duo not only produces fear but also makes us suspicious about the safety and security of our own existence.

As we have seen earlier, silence plays an important role in conveying the hidden tensions which are almost impossible to express in words. Pinter himself has described the function of this device:

“The pause is a pause because what has just happened in the minds and guts of the characters. They spring out of the text. They're not formal conveniences or stresses but part of the body of the action. And a silence equally means that something has happened to create the impossibility of anyone speaking for a certain amount of time – until they can recover from whatever happened before the silence.” (Gussow 36)

The power of silence is potentially exhibited in the final scene where Stanley is being taken away and Petey tries to intervene. Goldberg's understatement is a direct threat to which Petey has nothing to do but stoop. The dialogue is charged with the suggestive threat but without any apparent sense of violence. The politeness of the situation is what is more disturbing.

Goldberg: He needs special treatment.

Petey: We'll find someone.

Goldberg: No. Monty's the best there is. Bring him, McCann.

[They help Stanley out of the chair. They all three move towards the door, left.]

Petey: Leave him alone!

[They stop. Goldberg studies him.]

Goldberg: (insidiously) Why don't you come with us, Mr. Boles?

McCann: Yes, why don't you come with us?

Goldberg: Come with us to Monty. There is plenty of room in the car.

[Petey makes no move. They pass him and reach the door. McCann opens the door and picks up the suitcases.]

Petey: (broken) Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!

[They exit.] (*The Birthday Party* 95-6)

The taking away of Stanley and Petey's helplessness in front of the powerful opposing forces gives the play a dimension of classical tragedy. Men's submission to the working of Fate is visualized in Stanley's predicament. If we consider Stanley as a tragic hero (he may not have a noble birth, but he is dignified in his struggle against the antagonistic forces), then it is his taking away that constitutes the catharsis of the play. The scene evokes pity for the helpless man as well as a large amount of fear- the fear of insecurity. After Goldberg and McCann leave with Stanley, Petey 'picks up the paper and opens it.' The strips, earlier torn by McCann, fall to the floor. It signifies that the safety of domestic life is gone. Petey lets Meg, who is unaware of what just happened, daydream about the party last night and does not share the painful knowledge so Stanley's being taken away with her. So the audience have to remain in a tension about Meg's reaction when she will know the truth about Stanley. Her innocence and gullibility no longer are a source of laughter at the end of the play, but they evoke a feeling of dread as we know now that these qualities are very much fragile in front of the operations of the external power which is beyond her perception.

3

Stanley's predicament makes us realise that we are not at all safe and our existence may any time be threatened by forces which we do not understand. The fear felt by the characters of an absurd play is not a thing of trivial importance; this fear represents man's eternal angst in the face of a universe that has no meaning but what we give it. The plays of the Absurd present the human condition as it is and we see that the characters on the stage are endlessly haunted by fear. Man has lost his faith in the existence of a benevolent force, and this sense of loss creates the sense of fear as man finds nothing to fill up the void that exists at the core of his own existence.

Works Cited

Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and Its Double*. Grove Press. 1958. Print.

- Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Penguin Books. 1975. Reprint 2000. Print.
- Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Methuen Drama. 1961. Reprint 1991. Print.
- Gussow, Mel. *Conversations with Pinter*. Grove Press. 1996. Print.
- Ionesco, Eugene. *The Bald Soprano & Other Plays*. Grove Press. 1958. Print.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*. Penguin Books. 1994. Print.
- Naismith, Bill. *Faber Critical Guides: Harold Pinter*. Grove Press. 2001. Print
- Pinter, Harold. *Complete Works Vol. 1*. Grove Press. 1990. Print.
- Roberts, Michael (ed.). *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*. Faber and Faber Limited. First pub. 1936. Fouth edition 1982. Print.
- Worth, Katherine. *Casebook Series: Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party, The Caretaker & The Homecoming*. A. E. Dyson. (ed.) Palgrave Macmillan. 1986. Print.

Environment in Literature: An Ecocritical Reading of Kenneth Anderson's Jungle Lore

Kaustav Chanda

Abstract: The objective of the paper is to make an enquiry into the representation of nature in the jungle-narratives of Kenneth Anderson. Kenneth Anderson, in his real-life adventure stories, has presented India of her glorious yore, with lush green landscapes and with mystifying jungles. His journey into the wilderness of Southern India reveals the intricate relationship between man and nature. An eco-centric reading of his books will help explaining how nature bestows her gifts on her violators; how man's loyalty to her waver under numerous circumstances which, ironically arise because of his selfish and materialistic motives; and how nature flares up one's creative faculty and imagination. The author has taken up grave issues that have always threatened our environment. He presents the animal kingdom in stark opposition to the human world, a world which is guided by basic instinctual drives against a world driven by material pursuits. The paper also aims at finding out how Anderson has explored the causes of human beings' unchecked dominion over nature which results in wanton destruction of natural reserves.

Key Words: Nature, Ecocriticism, Environment, Jungles, Tiger, Panther

While reading the big-game narratives by renowned hunters like Kenneth Anderson and Jim Corbett, the jungles in India seem to be a part of the remote past—a primitive world which has long been shrouded by the modern civilization with its penchant for a world largely dominated by material advancements and technological prowess. Nature, in Kenneth Anderson's tales, appears in an aesthetic avatar, marveled at for its majestic grace, its healing power, and its impregnable mysteries. Kenneth Anderson takes us into a journey of the wilderness of South India—a region which is now known for high industrial growth, its chemical and technological hubs—and in graphic detail presents a country where once panthers roamed freely, where the

distant call of a tiger sounded like a serenade, where man and nature thrived in a harmonious existence. In the wake of rapid industrialization and striving for higher and more comfortable standard of living, nature is scarred—the ancient trees are felled to make room for the civilization to expand its branches; the animals and birds butchered by poachers in several parts of the country to satisfy the whims of a few rich men who believe that a tiger's claw, or a rhino's horn can guarantee eternal youth and virility; and zoos and rescue centers are crowded with endangered species. Environmentalists in India and all over the world have expressed their concerns over this alarming issue, several summits are held every year, and policies are taken by the government during every five-year plan, but will planting a few trees and recruiting a few personnel in the forest divisions for night-patrolling solve the problem? In his introduction to *Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*, Kenneth Anderson ruefully mulls over the changing scenario of Indian junglescapes:

Anyone who has come to know and love the jungle, its solitude and all that its denizens signify, could never appreciate such sentiments, nor the sense of irreparable loss and sorrow felt by those who look for the once familiar forms that are no longer there, or listen vainly for those once familiar sounds that were music to their ears, only to be greeted by a devastating silence. (*Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*, viii)

Wilderness, for Kenneth Anderson, is a liberating force, one which makes him forget the monotony of the urban life. The healing touch of nature enables him to soothe his spirit which is consistently troubled by the din and bustle of the city life. In *The Call of the Man Eater*, he echoes his sentiments, that people who do not possess a keen eye to see the beauties of nature, an ear for the melody of the sounds that can be heard in the jungles at night, and a desire to merge his senses with the unknown, cannot understand his craving to explore the 'unknown and the unfathomed'. In the story, *A Night by the Camp Fire*, collected in this book, Kenneth Anderson gives an account of how his wearied soul is rejuvenated when he goes out to wander in the jungles on a moonlit night, and sitting on a rock or tree, watches the sublime stillness of the jungle, and hears the symphony of the jungle creatures. It is as if he gathers the fodder for his thoughts that will keep him going once he goes back to bear the monstrosity of the civilization,

not unlike Wordsworth who visits Tintern Abbey to re-live his earlier experiences at the Wye, and to collect the 'food for thought':

The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. (*Tintern Abbey*, lines 60-64)

Not unlike Wordsworth, he feels a divine presence in the lap of nature. He feels that on such occasions his inner self embraces divinity. For him, no religious rigmarole, institutionalized perceptions, churches and clergies can impart that feeling of redemption which only the silent benevolence of nature can bestow: "I feel very near indeed then to God, far closer than I can feel in any church where the padre, either on the basis of a monthly salary or other means of remuneration, automatically repeats words for the uplift of my erring and sinful self" (*The Call of the Man Eater*, 101). Not only that, like a child he savours the rawness in the environment of Kundukottai, comparing the place with a fairyland. In a graphic detail, he gives an account of the surrounding jungles—the thin meandering line of Doddhalla stream, the tamarind; jumlum, mutthee, ficus, neem, and bunyan trees; and the cool breeze blowing through the valley. Curiously enough, he refrains from explorations, as if his trampling on the forest-grounds will disrupt the course of nature, and longs to feel the uncorrupted, unadulterated essence of the jungle, listening to calls of birds like junglecocks, spurfowl, peafowl and 'brain-fever'. In *This is the Jungle*, besides marveling at the beauty of the jungles, he finds a thrill while fathoming the mysteries of an unknown, untamed world: "It is all very enchanting. Each sound tells its own story. There are the sounds of fear, the sound of love and mating, the call of hunger, and sometimes the cry for companionship" (*This is the Jungle*, 3). According to noted ecocritic Lawrence Buell, there cannot be 'is' without a 'where', that is, a man's existence is always defined by his physical environment. Kenneth Anderson fondly recollects the fragrance of the rain-soaked earth, the grey rocks, the bright green leaves, the display of light and shadow. Where someone lives is not only an objective fact, but how the environment is felt, also constitutes his identity. Buell also suggests that a man's imagination is shaped by his environment. This was how J. M. Synge's imagination and language were influenced by the rugged simplicity of Aran

Islands; Wordsworth's by the Wye; and Hardy's by Wessex. Despite not being a poet, Kenneth Anderson finds poetry in the surroundings, his imaginations flaring up every time he stops to behold the natural abundance. Just like a poet who wants himself to be heard, Kenneth Anderson wants his readers to witness the bounties of nature through his eyes. He wants us to share his perceptions, his passions, and his childlike enthusiasm in rediscovering the treasures which lie hidden from the mundane, narrow vision of modernity. What are ideas to a poet if they do not bring a revolution? May be that is why Shelley wanted to imbibe the 'fierce spirit' of the West Wind within himself; Coleridge wanted to "build that dome in air"; and Keats wanted to sing like the nightingale and desired to be immortal in his dying days. He invites us to be a part of the magical journey: "So let us look for a while at these regions of solitude where the sounds of men are no more and Nature reigns supreme" (*This is the Jungle*, 4). Away from the civilized domain, he journeys into the realm of 'lordly sambar stag', 'pert little muntjac', swift antelope, moody bison, and cunning tiger, wondering at the apparent silence of the jungle-spots which have been witnesses to many activities, as though walking among the shelves in a huge library and looking at the records.

Literary representations of nature do not always focus on the idyllic aspects of it. Rather, nature also seems to nurture what is primeval, evil, and dark. In *The Evil One of Umbalmeru*, collected in *The Call of the Man-Eater*, Kenneth Anderson begins with a description of the birth and growth of a creeper, which he calls a 'killer', that gradually engulfs the trees which provide it with a support system to grow. The description, on a symbolic plane, serves as a prelude to the rise of the man-eating tigress that escaped from a circus.

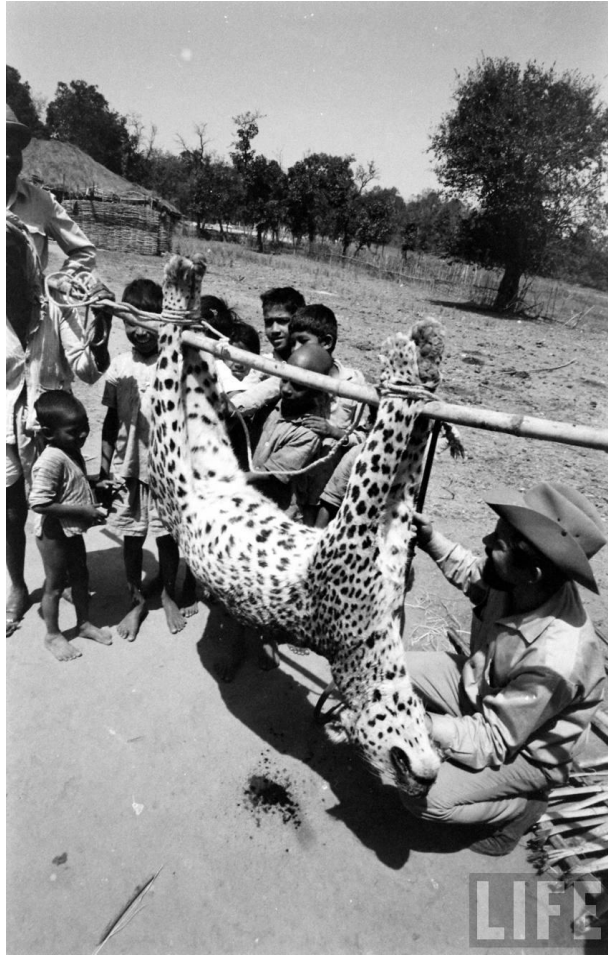
One of the most dominant arguments of ecocriticism is that it does not consider the human interest to be the only legitimate interest. One of the primary reasons for the wild animals straying into the human habitations is because of the fact that their natural habitats are jeopardized by human enterprise in those areas. If you venture into the beautiful wilderness of the North Bengal, the Dooars region, you will be surprised to know that elephant herds wreck havoc in the villages adjacent to the forests almost on a weekly routine, destroying the fields, crushing the fragile bamboo huts of the native tribal people, sometimes resulting in human casualties. At Mumbai, the Indian Institution of Technology, and several housing complexes in the suburbs have seen sporadic excursions of the marauding leopards, accompanied with the

reports of occasional maulings and deaths. How many times have we heard about tigers preying on humans in the Sunderban areas? Almost every household in these areas has been a witness to such a tragedy. Barring Sunderbans and a few wildlife sanctuaries, the forests in India, especially the natural forest reserves are subject to the greedy as well as devastating excursions of the mankind. Therefore, it is imperative that at times the human beings have to pay the price, and the hunter becomes the hunted. But how do our rational minds react to the situation? We respond with open hostility. The tea-gardens adjacent to the forests in the Dooars and the Terrain regions sometimes become temporary homes for the pregnant female panthers. Several reported incidents show how mercilessly they are poisoned or butchered by the local villagers. In *The Hungry Tide*, Amitava Ghosh portrays the habitual animosity of the Sunderban people towards tigers, where he shows a tiger being burnt alive when the beast accidentally enters a cattle-shed. George Orwell, in *Shooting an Elephant* describes the elation of the Burmese after he kills the elephant, their bloodlust propelling him to do so. Both Kenneth Anderson and Corbett mention in their writings, of how amateur hunters sometimes use inferior weapons, like muzzle-loaders or matchlocks while hunting a tiger, or a panther, thus fatally injuring the beast, sometimes crippling it for life, a good reason for it to become a man-eater. In 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the indiscriminate hunting of the tigers made the species almost wiped clean from the forests of India. Richard Ellis in his book, *Tiger Bone and Rhino Horn*, has come up with some disturbing facts. He notes that the poaching of tigers for traditional Chinese medicine began in South India during the mid 1980s, in order to meet the overwhelming demand for the parts by Chinese pharmaceutical companies. The trade has now gradually been extended in the areas with larger tiger population, like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Trading in tiger-parts has taken the form of organized crime in India. Ellis further mentions that a tiger can be killed if you have \$1 to buy poison, or around \$9 to buy steel-traps. Most of these killings are done by the native tribes who know the forests very well. Kenneth Anderson himself preferred the people from tribes such as Poojarees, Sholagas, and Karumbas, as his trackers. Poachers from such tribes are paid a meager amount, and Ellis comes up with a shocking revelation that in 1994, near Kanha Tiger Reserve, a trader paid four poachers \$15 each for killing a tiger. He records, "In Tibet, international Environmental Investigating Agency (EIA) examiners were told that a tiger skin was worth US\$ 10, 000, a leopard skin was offered for

\$850, and otter skin was valued at \$250” (*Tiger Bones and Rhino Horns*, 3), according to a report in 2004.



1.1 Tiger hunt in 1940s, courtesy Avaxnews.net



1.2 Leopard hunting in India, 1965, courtesy Avaxnews.net

In *Jungles Long Ago*, Kenneth Anderson expresses concern over the fate of Asiatic lions in the Gir forest. The conflict between the Maldhari tribe and the lions who regularly fed on their cattle, resulted in the death of many lions in the Gir in the 1970s. In desperation to save their livestock, Maldharis began poisoning the lions, and Kenneth Anderson says that during his visit to the Gir, he was informed that nine lions were poisoned not so long ago. He opines that since the lions move and hunt in packs, they are poisoned in numbers, as opposed to tigers and panthers as they prey alone. He also laments the fact that almost sixty-three percent of the forest-land was under cultivation, when he visited Gir forest for the first time in 1973. The menaces of deforestation, poisoning and poaching, he believes, are the main causes behind the doom of the Asiatic lions, facing hardships because of chiefly the lack of their natural prey: “The sanctuary is now estimated to support a wildlife population of less than twenty-five per cent of its original strength, compelling the lions to rely almost solely on the buffaloes of the

Maldharis for food” (‘Jungles Long Ago’, *The Kenneth Anderson Omnibus*, vol. 2, 684). Not only that, he is equally concerned about the state of natural fauna in Gir. The size of the sanctuary, he notes, has been reduced to a half of its original size. In the book he appears to be greatly appalled by the sight of trees, especially teak being felled to suit cultivation; excess of livestock preventing new saplings to grow and replenish the heavy losses incurred by nature because of cultivation; and removal of more than two hundred kilograms of grass fodder every year.

It seems as if God has endowed us human beings to prove our superiority to nature, its flora and fauna. What is the motivation behind the desire to conquer and dominate nature? Why do we seem to be thinking on the line of Alexander Selkirk, who says,

I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre all round to the sea,
I am Lord of the fowl and the brute. (*Alexander Selkirk*, 1-4)

Also, in *Genesis* I, verse XXVI, as is noted by Hans Anderson, God has proclaimed that the human beings are the lords of the world and that they will have a special place in his creation. Moreover, human beings have clearly fathomed, smart as they are, that they have the resources to wantonly destroy the natural reserves. The man-eaters that Kenneth Anderson shot in his long career as a big-game hunter, were disabled and disfigured by careless shooting by poachers and rajahs alike. Kenneth Anderson rues the fact that after shooting the beast, the hunter hardly bothers to follow the wounded animal to put it out of its misery. In *Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, after killing the man-eater of Yemmaydoddi and inspecting the carcass carefully in order to find out the cause behind the animal’s transformation into a dreaded man-eater, he says, “...and while the district was well rid of a murderous and unrelenting killer, it must be remembered that the irresponsible and unsporting shot from the ‘car shikaris’ was the root cause of all the trouble, and to their discredit must be laid the twenty-nine innocent human lives that were lost” (*Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, 148).



1.3 From left: Shri Jai Narain Vyas Chief Minister of Rajasthan, M.K.Brijraj Singh of Kotah, Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, Maharaja Man Singh of Jaipur, Rajpramukh Rajasthan, M.K. Bhawani Singh of Jaipur, and Maharao Bhim Singh of Kotah, courtesy, Avaxnews.net.

After killing a man-eater, often we see the author admiring the fine coating of a tiger, the lithe figure of a panther, and the majesty of an elephant. In the tale, *The Crossed Tusker of Gerhetti*, compiled in *Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*, he appreciates the mighty beast of the jungle: “Although a killer, the ‘crossed-tusker of Gerhetti’ was a brave fighter, and I honoured him as he lay before my still smoking muzzle—mighty in life and even mightier in his death” (*Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*, 94)! Kenneth Anderson cannot help but feel deep admiration for the courageous animals which ventured into the territory of a far more dangerous creature, man, not driven by whim or bloodlust, but only for survival. Regarding the panther which wrecked havoc in Jalahali, he says: “For while others killed in stealth, taking their victims

unawares, this leopard fought cleanly and courageously in defense of its own life, against great odds, though it was severely wounded” (*Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, 160).

Ecocriticism pays attention to the portrayal of the environment in literary and non-literary texts. In Kenneth Anderson, the animal world, which falls in the ambit of such discourse, is presented as benign, loyal, and courageous at times, and sometimes as dangerous and unpredictable. He is filled with glee and wonder when he sees a strange simplicity in the behaviours of the creatures of the jungle, something which the complex civilization lacks. In *The Creatures of the Jungle*, collected in *The Call of the Man-Eater*, he gives a detailed account of the wild dogs found in the jungles of India, their family structure, co-ordination while hunting, and of course, their indomitable courage. He recounts how they hunt in packs, with every beast knowing its job. They chase their quarry for a long time, with some dogs running ahead of the prey, while the rest bringing up the rear. They hunt down even bigger animals, like tigers, and in one occasion Kenneth Anderson himself had been a witness to this. Their tenacity surprised him when he saw them tearing a much formidable and bigger animal to shreds, even though the pack suffered heavy casualties. Despite working with discipline, these animals, says Kenneth Anderson, are extremely unpredictable. He states that these animals generally do not attack their cousins, the jackals and the hyenas. But on one occasion, he recounts how six wild dogs hunted down the mother of his pet hyena, Jackie, an exception to their general code of behaviour. Also, in *The Stripped Terror of Chamala Valley*, compiled in *Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, he admires the ‘langur watchman’ for its dedication when on vigilance duty, and sarcastically remarks that human beings should take a leaf out of the book of the ‘langur watchman’.

Despite being a hunter himself, Kenneth Anderson never resorted to killing animals in an unsporting manner. Many a times he came across a sleeping tiger, but did not shoot it before warning it with a cough or whistle. In *Creatures of the jungle*, he sounds disdainful of the hunters who often recourse to brutality, working without ethics or scruples. He narrates how, in distant past, Nimrods engaged in hunting boar on horseback with spears, the technique called ‘pigsticking’. A pack of hunting dogs were engaged to distract the boar, while the hunters on horseback disposed it off. In this process, several dogs were sacrificed as the wild boar is a hardy and brutal adversary: “Being a dog lover, I think this so-called sport was decidedly brutal, particularly when employed against wild boar. The most courageous dog has little chance against

a fully roused boar, and many members of a pack were torn to ribbons by the task of the infuriated pig” (*Call of the Man-Eater*, 215).

However, some instances narrated in the book points out to the fact that Kenneth Anderson was not above the common human folly of assuming his superiority over nature. For instance, he recollects how, once in Salem district, he, in order to have some fun, showered some bears with pellets, and how they creatures fought viciously among themselves because they thought each other to be the perpetrator of the crime, while the author sat silently on a tree and took savage pleasure in watching the gory battle. In *Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, we find him letting a poacher walk away free instead of handing him over to forest guards, for killing a helpless sambar doe, just because he takes a liking for the man, thereby valuing human interest over that of an animal. Such instances abound in Kenneth Anderson’s jungle lore. While he displays antipathy towards poachers and feudal lords for indiscriminate killing of the wild game, he himself considers animals as trophies. In *The Man-Eater of Yemmaydoddi*, compiled in *Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, he takes his friend Alfie Robertson to Yemmaydoddi to shoot a tiger, where we find him weighing options—whether to shoot a tiger as a matter of chance, or to shoot a panther, as a certainty. Incidentally, both the animals concerned here were not man-eaters. On another occasion, while hunting a man-eating tiger, he comes across a nice specimen of a panther, and itches to shoot him, as for him it is a nice game. Many a times we find him skinning a tiger or a panther with utmost precision and eagerness. Also, quite a few number of times, the author appears to be—despite being an ardent nature-lover—valuing human interests more than those of animals. In several stories, he recounts how several times, in order to secure co-operation from the anguished and reluctant villagers, and sometimes to prove his own mettle as a big-game hunter, he had to shoot an odd panther or a tiger which had taken to cattle-lifting, and hence becoming a menace for the villagers. More often than not, he assuaged his conscience, he says, that sooner or later, it would have become bold enough to be a man-eater. On other occasions, he shot those hapless panthers or tigers that interfered with his baits, laid for some other animal. In *The Sulekunta Panther*, collected in *Call of the Man-Eater*, he wants to kill the panther because to him, it was responsible for making him sit all night in heavy rain and contract fever and he feels he has to shoot it, for a misguided sense of personal vendetta. Though an animal lover in the truest sense, he can be accused of mistreating animals, no matter how unintentional that might have been. In *A Night by the Camp Fire*, collected in *Call of the Man-*

Eater, he reminisces how one day he fed a panther cub the putrid meat of a sambar, in order to figure out how its digestive system would react to the experience, and the poor creature died of cholera. All these tiny, apparently trivial incidents point out that he, too, had never been above the common human failing, which recognizes human superiority over nature—a fact which justifies ecocriticism's argument that nature, or natural environment sometimes makes a man reach out to his darker recesses of his heart.

In the purview of ecocriticism, also is included how nature is given a presence in the structures created by men, such as theme parks, shopping malls, a florist's shop, farm houses and fashion galleries. Zoos often try to create natural environments for their inhabitants, for example, the Zoological Garden in Alipore, Kolkata, has artificial caves for a lion and a tiger—an endeavour to recreate their natural habitat. Likewise, it has a pool made for the hippo, a swamp for rhinos, and plants within the bird-cages so that their occupants may perch on the branches. Kenneth Anderson, in his books, has presented his house in Bangalore (now Bangaluru) as an abode of several jungle creatures that do not fall in the category of normal pets—a hyena, a few panther cubs, a jackal, a sloth bear, and a python. In order to accommodate them, he had to create an environment in which they would survive. For instance, in *The Creatures of the Jungle*, collected in *Call of the Man-Eater*, Kenneth Anderson tells how he created such a space for Jackie, his pet hyena. The animal, he says, is generally very attached to his own den. Therefore, he dug an island surrounded by trenches on all four sides, in his Bangalore residence, in imitation of the den it used to inhabit in the jungle. Since hyenas cannot be brought up like domestic curs, despite being from the same family, the author fed it mostly with raw beef, usually decomposed, as hyenas are primarily scavengers.

In the introduction to *The Ecocritical Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty states that human culture is inextricably connected with nature, influencing it and influenced by it: "Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the artifacts of language and literature" (*The Ecocritical Reader*, XVIII). This is indeed true, as is evident from Kenneth Anderson's interactions with people from different jungle tribes such as Poojarees, Karumbas, and Sholagas. In *Byra the Poojaree*, collected in *Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*, he chances upon a poacher, Byra, belonging to the poojaree tribe. This man lives in a dugout, with his wife and four children, living on bare minimum, and hunting to eat and sometimes for business. The

author soon finds out about the man's inexhaustible repertoire of knowledge of the jungles and the wild animals. He notices that living among the jungle-creatures has made him as acute as them, in hearing, smelling, and tracking. In the same story, he displays his keen sense of smell when he tracks a tiger only by smelling it from miles away, when someone as knowledgeable and experienced as Kenneth Anderson himself, fails to catch the faint odour in air. In *A Night in Spider Valley*, collected in *Jungles Long Ago*, he saves the lives of both Kenneth Anderson and his friend Eric Newcombie from a rogue elephant, not once, but twice, disdaining his own. His sharp senses, in the first encounter with the pachyderm saves the day for the author and his friend, while during the second encounter he literally throws himself in front of the raging elephant to save the 'Dorai' and his friend. Even though he hunts illegally, the author feels drawn towards this insignificant looking man, a child of nature, whose goodness has its origin in the lap of nature, something of which William Wordsworth has said in *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*: "Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language" (*Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, 3). While killing a tiger, or a panther, or a rogue elephant qualify as a sport for civilized people, these aboriginal tribes live among the wild animals, and sure enough, they know every nook and corner of the forests, and face challenges everyday for survival.

According to Lawrence Buell, while in literary works a landscape often exists for symbolic and ideological purposes, this is not always so, as in literature nature also exists in its own right and not simply as an ideological screen. Apart from representing nature as a background for human action, or to achieve a symbolic purpose, it also renders what Buell calls 'Thick Description', that is, a detailed map of the place concerned. What Buell implies is that a landscape's history is inextricably knit with its natural history; the author tracing the development of people of that particular area from several dimensions—anthropological, geological, geographical, biological, economical, cultural, literary and other factors. Kenneth Anderson, in all his works, has given a thorough description of the regions where he hunted—the people, their occupations, their cultures, idiosyncrasies, beliefs, superstitions, prejudices, the geographical scenario, and climatic peculiarities. Some of his stories include maps of the areas, to show the 'beat' of a tiger, or a panther, and sometimes to show the distribution of flora and fauna in the vast landscapes of Southern India. He has also provided valuable information

regarding the creatures of the wilderness—their natural habitats, preying habits, family structures, general behaviour, and attitude towards human beings, as can be seen in *The Black Panther of Sivanipalli*, *The Call of the Man-Eater*, *Jungles Long Ago*, and *Tales from the Indian Jungle*, where through several anecdotes, he has portrayed a true picture of what lies beyond the civilized world—a world which is ruled by basic instincts, where nature is worshipped and admired as a deity and feared as an evil force beyond human comprehension. Refusing to allow ‘mind’, ‘language’, ‘culture’, and ‘history’ to determine what nature should be, Kenneth Anderson seems to suggest that the mystery of the ‘other’ world, can alone be the judge of all human meanings, as he says in the introduction to *The Black Panther of Sivanipalli*:

Come with me for the few hours it may take you to read this book into the domain of the tiger, the panther and the elephant, amidst the stupendous swaying heights and deep shade of the giant trees whose boles form the structure of this marvellous edifice. Forget the false values and ideas of what is called civilization, those imposed rules on the free and simple truths of life. Here in the jungle you will find truth, you will find peace, bliss and happiness; you will find life itself. There is no room, no time at all, for hypocrisy, for make-believe, for that which is artificial and false. You are face to face with the primitive, with that which is real, with that which is most wonderful—which is God. (*The Black Panther of Sivanipalli*, 4-5)

Works Cited

Anderson, Kenneth. *Nine Man-Eaters and One Rogue*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2010.

Print.

---. *The Call of the Man-Eater*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2011. Print.

---. *Man-Eaters and Jungle Killers*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2002. Print.

---. *This is the Jungle*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2005. Print.

---. *Tales from the Indian Jungle*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2001. Print.

---. *Jungles Long Ago*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2005. Print.

- . *The Black Panther of Sivanipalli*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2011. Print.
- . *The Kenneth Anderson Omnibus*. Vol. 2. 2000. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2012. Print.
- Bertens, Hans, ed. 'Ecocriticism'. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination. Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. London: Harvard University Press, 1996. Print.
- Corbett, Jim. *The Jim Corbett Omnibus*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: OUP, 1991. Print.
- . *My Kumaon*. New Delhi: OUP, 2012. Print.
- Coleridge, Earnest Hartley. *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol. 1 and 2. London: Clarendon Press, 1912. Print.
- Ellis, Richard. *Tiger Bone and Rhino Horn*. Washington: Oisland Press, 2005. Print.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. London: Harper Collins, 2004. Print.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, ed. *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996. Print.
- Jones, Susan, ed. *The New Jerusalem Bible*. New York: Doubleday, 1985. Print.
- Orwell, George. 'Shooting an Elephant'. *Shooting an Elephant and other Essays*. 1968. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Palgrave, Francis Turner, comp. *The Golden Treasury*. 1907. New York: OUP, 2002. Print.
- Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Wordsworth, William. *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*. TeacherWeb, 4 Feb. 2014. Web. 14 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.teacherweb.com/IN/Burris/Comber/wordsworth-prefacelb.pdf>>.
- AvaxNews. Web. 17 Mar, 2014. <<http://www.avaxnews.net>>.

Ageing, Memory and Self-delusion: An Analysis of Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*

Rina Rajbanshi

Abstract: Memory in its traditional understanding crystallizes the perceptive capacity of a human being allowing him to travel through the past. This long-established theory is questioned and debated in Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*, in which the narrator reconstitutes his memory in an attempt to construct his self-schema. The reliability of memory and its interconnected nature with history is cross-examined in this novel. This paper proposes to trace how the author demystifies the texture of memory through his brilliant craftsmanship in the construction of first person narrative.

Key words: Ageing, Reconstruction of Memory, Schema, Self-delusion.

“Memory is identity...you are what you have done; what you have done is in your memory; what you remember defines who you are; when you forget your life you cease to be, even before your death”

(Julian Barnes, *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*)

The above expression of Julian Barnes in his memoir *Nothing to Be frightened of*, perfectly illustrate Barnes's point of view regarding memory and the importance of memory in his writing. Memory has a relation with one's self-conception. As *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* elaborates Wilson and Ross's theory of Memory:

“The way I remember my personal past partly depends on the kind of person I take myself to be, and my memories sometimes alter on the basis of changes in that self-conception”

According to philosophers and psychologist, self-concept influences one's process of remembering, memory in turn influences one's life, the decision-making, choices and attribution of significance are determined in part by what and how one remembers (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*). But memory is not reliable as Albert Einstein says “Memory is deceptive because it is colored by today's events”. Using memory in fiction is not a new thing but being a postmodernist writer thinking out of the box is what expected from Julian Barnes. He doesn't use memory just to make his old narrator ponder over his past and make him happy rather the writer deconstructs the narrator's image to show how his old narrator distorts and then reconstructs his memories to suit his self image. This paper tries to analyse how Barnes portrays the unreliable and self-delusionary nature of memory and how it helps to build the self-schema of an ageing person in the last years of his life in his The Man Booker Prize winning novel *The Sense of an Ending* (2011). It also analyses the deliberate attempt of an individual to create his own story by re-evaluating the past by which he perceives and recreates his own identity and builds an image in front of the world.

The Sense of an Ending has Tony Webster as the narrator who goes back to his school days when along with his friends Colin and Alex, he befriended Adrian, an intelligent and a serious boy. Smart and arrogant boys with their own conception and imagination about the world, philosophize whatever comes under their way. They enjoy saying “That's philosophically evident” (Barnes 10) and the words like “Weltanschauung”¹ and “Sturm und Drang”². They are pretentious which according to them is normal in youth. They are ‘book-hungry’, ‘sex-hungry’, ‘meritocratic’ and ‘anarchistic’ (Barnes, 9). All political and social systems appear to them as corrupt, yet they demur to consider an alternative system other than hedonistic chaos. Rationalizing life reaches to the extent where, when one of their classmates die, they come up with the explanation that This is a case of “Eros and Thanatos” in other words “sex and death” and “Thanatos wins again” (Barnes,13). Adding to this Adrian quotes “Camus said suicide was the only philosophical question” (Barnes, 13). They finish their school days by promising each other of lifelong friendship. Adrian goes to Cambridge with scholarship and Tony to Bristol to

study history. Tony finds a girlfriend, Veronica Ford, a student of Spanish who likes poetry and has better musical taste. In one vacation he visits her family and spends few uncomfortable days with them. Later on she breaks up with him. To his consternation, a letter arrives from his friend Adrian stating that he is going out with Veronica. Tony furiously writes an abusive letter to both of them. After few months he receives a telegram intimating Adrian's suicide. Adrian leaves a suicide note for the Coroner;

“Life is a gift bestowed without anyone asking for it; that the thinking person has a philosophical duty to examine both the nature of life and the conditions it comes with; and if this person decides to renounce the gift no one asks for, it is a moral and human duty to act on the consequences of that decision” (Barnes 48)

Then the narrator moves on the second part of the story where he briefly recounts the next forty years of his life until his sixties where one day he gets a letter from a lawyer informing him that Veronica's mother, Mrs Ford has bequeathed him five hundred pounds and two documents. He re-contacts Veronica with the help of Brother Jack's and re-examines his past life which resonates with complex emotions.

In later stages of life people live on their memories because when people are old a major part of their mind is occupied with their memories. Their existence and identity are based on their past, true to the sense of what Rene Descartes says “I think, therefore I am” (Discourse on the Method). But before going into the role of memory it is important to know how the character perceives his old age and what he thinks about the world. The novel takes the untrodden path when instead of giving the details of their day to day life cycle it gives the philosophical perspective and thought process which the old people perceive in various stages of their lives. One significant thought process among aged people is when they recount and differentiate between the lives of two generations. After reaching the last phase of his life, the narrator of this novel realises that the state of being old and young are two sides of the same coin: everyone over the age of thirty looks middle-aged when people are young and everyone over fifty antique. As time passes all the age differentials which capture the young's mind vanish and all end up “belonging to the same category, that of the non-young” (Barnes, 60). He makes fun of the people for whom the differences of time which are established in youth never really depart, even if the gap between two is only five months, the elder always remains the elder.

The narrator recollects the early days in his youth when he used to criticise the elders for maintaining an air of superiority around them whose lives have been simpler in comparison. The elders remind the younger ones that they too have once been young and so could speak with authority about life. The narrator remembers the elders saying, it's just a phase "you'll grow out of it, life will teach you reality and realism" (Barnes, 11). But when the narrator was young he declined to acknowledge that his elders had ever been anything like the younger. He felt that the younger ones knew that they grasped life, truth, morality and art more clearly than the elders. In old days when one starts forgetting things one realises that:

"when you are in your twenties, even if you're confused and uncertain about your aims and purposes, you have a strong sense of what life itself is, and of what you in life are, and might become. Later...later there is more uncertainty, more overlapping, more back-tracking, more false memories. Back then, you can remember your short life in its entirety. Later, the memory becomes a thing of shreds and patches" (Barnes, 104,105)

The gradual process towards the uncertainty of his memory is noticeable. The old man prefers to die with a positive memory of him given to his daughter, his grandchildren and to the world. He understands that he can't refrain himself from producing a good image in people's memory. But the image which makes him happy, satisfied is not the actual picture in reality but encrusted with the colour of the present. Life is not what one assumes when they are young, but one understands it and values it only after one experience love, hatred, loss, success through the course of time. In the later stage, people make their identity and self-perception from these experiences and from their memories, and make a pattern out of it about themselves. Sir Frederic Charles Bartlett, a British psychologist and renowned professor of experimental psychology at the University of Cambridge, in his classic book *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932), theorize the process of memory:

"One's memory of an event reflects a blend of information contained in specific traces encoded at the time it occurred, plus inferences based on knowledge, expectations, beliefs, and attitudes derived from other sources" (Costandi)

The recuperation of information which has been unknowingly and sometimes knowingly distorted in the procedure of remembering is structured within the historical and cultural surroundings of the individual and is attuned with the existing or newly perceived knowledge. As Christopher Frost elaborates the psychology of self-deception in his article:

“A modification begins at the first perceptible moment, when information passes through... “sensory memory”... According to Freud, the key tenet to self-deception is that though we are not aware of the existence of this information, it exerts a considerable influence over our behaviour. Once memories are somehow designated as “threatening”, the information is either transformed (via mechanisms of defence) or barred from conscious awareness by cognitive censors... while allowing non-threatening information to flow.” (Web)

Memory plays a crucial role in this novel since the whole story comes out from the fragments of the narrator’s memory after discovering his friend’s piece of document and his reason of suicide. In *The Sense of an Ending*, memory or the process of remembering helps the narrator to identify and testify himself. The narrator who spends an average life without any complication and contradiction suddenly stands in front of the vital and critical question of moral responsibility of Adrian’s death. The whole existence of his self-perception comes under scrutiny. He then performs the same thing what Prof. Bartlett articulates about ‘Reconstructing memory’ to accomplish his ‘Self-Schema’ which:

“...fills up the gaps of his perception by the aid of what he has expressed before in similar situations, or, though this comes to much the same thing in the end, by describing what he takes to be ‘fit’, or suitable, to such a situation” (Bartlett, 14)

The narrator recollects and re-evaluates the bits and pieces of his memories as evidences to exculpate himself. His self-deception is not always an act of unconscious mind but sometimes an intentional process to create the positive and perfect identity and hence the intention is political. The narrator recreates his ‘personal history’ and he is aware of the imperfection of history when he says “History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation” (Barnes, 17). There are many evidences where the narrator questions the truthfulness of history based on memory which is again unreliable. He remembers

Adrian analysing the history of Robson's suicide ("minor historical event" according to Adrian) by inducing the doubt of writing his story after fifty years of his death with the unreliable and insufficient documents he has left i.e. his letter "sorry mum" and the fact that he makes his girlfriend pregnant. By mentioning Robson's death the narrator fixes the setting for Adrian's death, since there is a similarity between both of their deaths. Both committed suicide. In the beginning the narrator tries to reconstruct the personal history of Robson and its reliability in the absence of Robson. Here actually the narrator sets forth the stage for the history of Adrian.

As the narrator takes us deeper into the world of his memories, he gives us the hint that "What you end up remembering isn't always the same as what you have witnessed" (Barnes, 3). As Justin Jordan remarks in *The Guardian* about the narrator that the whole act of revisiting his past in later stage of his life challenges his core beliefs about responsibility and the very chain of events that make up his sense of self. The narrator spends an average life unlike Adrian who took his life in his own hand and decided to renounce it. He describes himself as who has neither won nor lost, but just let his life happen to him, who has the usual ambitions and has settled everything too quickly before even realising it, who has avoided being hurt and calls it a capacity of survival. The narrator confesses that he has a certain instinct for self-preservation. He successfully puts Veronica out of his mind, and out of his history. When he reads the piece of paper from Adrian's diary and his theory of accumulation especially from the last fragmented sentence: "So, for instance, if Tony..." (Barnes, 86), he realises the chain of responsibility and he agrees "I saw my initial in there" (Barnes, 149). The When in school days Adrian has been asked the origin of the First World War, Adrian raises the question of ascribing responsibility on any individual. For him:

"...the whole business of ascribing responsibility a kind of cop-out...so that everyone else is exculpated... Or we blame a historical process as a way of exonerating individuals... it seems to me that there is- was- a chain of individual responsibilities, all of which were necessary, but not so long a chain that everybody can simply blame"(Barnes,12)

He recalls his own letter which he wrote to Adrian and Veronica and advised Adrian to consult with her mother. After all these years he can't imagine himself writing such a

disturbing and vulgar letter. He doesn't even recognize that part of himself from which the letter has come out but perhaps this is simply his further 'self-deception'.

The deceiving nature of memory is visible in two imageries given by the narrator, "a river rushing nonsensically upstream, its wave and wash lit by half a dozen chasing torch beams" and "another river, broad and grey, the direction of its flow disguised by a stiff wind exciting the surface" (Barnes, 3). The hustle of fresh memories in response to new perspectives gives rise to an alternative memory. In all the memorable events in his life- when he was in school, in the time of growing up, when his relationship with Veronica ended, when Adrian started going out with his ex-girlfriend, when Adrian had relationship with Veronica's mother and got a child, when he heard about Adrian's suicide, his child's abnormality, etc- he creates delusions for himself- a feel good, a positive image for himself, a solid justification for himself. The reason for all his justification is his refusal to take all the responsibility for Adrian's death and his abnormal son. He believes this is a chain of responsibility where no individual person should be blamed. The novel ends with this note: "There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond these, there is unrest. There is great unrest" (Barnes, 150) and thus leaving the readers to ponder over the narrator's true self. The reason of this mental process is clarified by the Chilean writer Roberto Brodsky in one of his interviews as he says: "It's not merely a task of memorialization or archival categorization but rather a task that involves a political intention or an attempt to guard or protect against the potential threats that the future may present."(web)

The novel examines the critical structure of human mind, how it plays with memory and how memory works and helps someone to save his/her integrity of self-concept. Being a master of expressing human experiences, Julian Barnes is successful in narrating his protagonist's mental conflict while creating a positive identity and self-schema through a series of broken memories. And the writer's fabrication of different aspects of human psychology concerning his identity and his existence around an interesting, thought provoking and moving story of Tony Webster, Adrian and Veronica are the main focuses of this paper.

End notes:

1. 'Weltanschauung', in German, means the world view of an individual.
2. 'Sturm und Drang' refers to a literary movement characterised by the expression of emotional unrest.

Work Cited

Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. London: Vintage Books. 2012. Print.

Bartlett, Frederic C. *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cambridge University Press, 1995. Print.

Caro, Pedro Garcia, et al. *The Uncertain Territory of Memory: A conversation with Chilean writer Roberto Brodsky*. Trans. Lisa DiGiovani. (March 2011). Web. 9 March 2014.

Costandi, Mo. *Reconstructive Memory: Confabulating the past, Simulating the Future*. (January 9, 2007). Web. 18 March 2014

Frost, Christopher, et al. The Psychology of self-Deception as Illustrated in Literary Characters. *Janus Head*. (Fall 2001). Web. 10 March 2014

Jordan, Justine. *The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes-review*. The Guardian (26th July, 2011). Web. 5 March 2014.

Memory. Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (11th March, 2003). Web. 9 March 2014.

Myers, Garry C and Myers, Caroline E. 'Reconstructive Recall'. *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 27, No-4 (Oct., 1916), pp- 493-506. Web. Jstor. 17 March 2014.

Wolters A.W. Rev. of *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* by F.C. Bartlett. Cambridge University Press. Vol. 8. No.31 (Jul., 1933), pp-374-376. Web. jstor. 7 March 2014