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Zahida Zaidi

Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and the Contemporary Theatre

The Lower Depths has an interesting history. Chekhov, who read it in the script, had some misgivings about its success in the theatre on account of its "unbroken gloom", but praised it as" new and unmistakenably fine". Stanislavsky accepted it as an exciting challenge for the producer and actors. He acknowledged its depth and complexity when he pointed out that, for the purpose of interpretation, one had to capture the inner movement. Its production, by the Moscow Art Theatre, was a resounding success. There were nineteen curtain calls for the author on the opening night. And according to Stanislavsky, after the first night, "Gorky became the hero of the day. He was followed in the streets. Admirers, especially of the fair sex, crowded him," [1] much to the embarrassment of the shy, simple man. During its national tour, the Moscow Art Theatre had to give fifty performances of the play in St. Petersburg alone. It was then banned by the order of the police. Ever since its inception, it has been one of the most popular plays in the repertoire of the Moscow Art Theatre. *The Lower Depths* took Europe also by storm. In Berlin there were five hundred performances of the play during 1903-04. From its earliest days to the present time, it has been translated in a large number of languages, both European and Oriental, and has been frequently produced in diverse lands.

Apart from its theatrical success and popular appeal,

The Lower Depths has also received glowing tributes from critics and scholars. Eric Bentley characterized it as a "naturalistic masterpiece of the New Theatre Movement"[2]. Allardyce Nicoll, too, acknowledges it to be a dramatic masterpiece and "one work by which he (Gorky) will assuredly continue to be known "[3] Norris Haughten an American critic, praises it as" one of the most moving theatrical experiences of a lifetime." [4] Similarly Alexander Bakshy, in a perceptive article on Gorky's theatre, draws attention to the quality of music in *The Lower Depths*, "which springs from the interplay of brilliantly expressed ideas and striking characterization." And praises it as, "a remarkable work of art, surging with a life of its own, presenting characters that are unique on the Russian stage and distinguished by an epigrammatic brilliance that is matched in Russian drama only by Griboydov's *Wit Works Woe* and Gogol's *The Inspector General.* "[5] Helene Muchnic, on the other hand, maintains, that by the sheer intensity of their dramatic vitality, the characters in *The Lower Depths* transcend their realistic functions and become symbolic figures in a parable about human existence. [6]

On the face of it, *The Lower Depths* is a realistic play. Gorky styled it as" Scenes from Russian Life". But it is not merely a slice of life. Its realism is way apart from the naturalism of the French School. It has both complexity and depth and is felt to have a universal framework of reference. Similarly, *The Lower Depths* appears to be a drama without a plot or a hero. But its apparent casualness is deceptive, for it has not only a rich texture, but also an overriding vision

that holds the diverse elements together and ensures a vivid emotional and intellectual dramatic response.

The milieu is a night lodging , kept by a harsh , greedy, Kostilioff and his callous wife Vassilisa. The scene is a "basement room resembling a cave, of which the ceiling merges into the low stone walls." Here a desperate group of waifs, convicts, paupers, thieves, drunkards, and other sediments and inhabitants of the lower depths of society are miserably huddled together. The life stories of these unglamorous people interpenetrate the texture of the play and as the drama proceeds, a world of suffering and despair, dreams and illusions, painful memories and futile regrets, desperate work and irresponsible parasitic existence unfolds before us through casual dialogue, petty clashes, stray remarks and unpremeditated confessions.

The company includes a pauperized Baron, an alcoholic Actor, an illusion ridden prostitute – Nastaya, a young thief-Pepel, a poor widow- Kavashnaya (Vendor of meat pies), a poor and embitterd locksmith – Kleshtch and his consumptive wife – Anna, a cynical cap maker – Bubnoff, a crazy shoemaker – Alyoshka, an ex-convict – Satine, a Tartar, the landlady's helpless sister – Natasha and her uncle – Miedviedieff (a policeman) who shows up from time to time, and a solitary old traveler Luka, who strays into this company for a brief period. Although portrayed with a few strokes of dialogue, chance encounters and inconsequential action, these characters emerge as unique and spontaneous artistic creations, dramatically alive in their suffering and desperation – the deep gloom of their wasted lives being illuminated, from time to time, by the insights of their cre-

ator. While the play was in progress, Gorky wrote to Stanislavsky:

> The trouble is that these characters of mine are crowding me and themselves, and I cannot get them to take their places or to reconcile them to each other. The Devil take them, they talk, talk and talk, and they talk so well, honestly, that it would be a pity to stop them.[7]

The statement testifies to the full-blooded artistic statement that *The Lower Depths* is, and to the fact that here the author's artistic insights often transcend his conscious intentions.

Of these characters Vassilisa Karpovna and her husband, Kostilyoff are painted in more definite colours and with a strong note of indictment. They act as foils to the central group of lodgers that mainly engages our attention. Vassilisa is a young and good looking woman, married to an old man. She is cunning, crafty, callous, bossy and self-indulgent. She is cruel to her younger sister Natasha and contemptuous of every one else. She is having a love affair with the young thief Pepel, but even this affair is selfish and sordid. Her lover accuses her of having no soul, which makes her love degrading, rather than ennobling, for a man. Kostilyoff, her elderly husband, too, is a mean, nagging, bad tempered, cruel and greedy person. He exploits his lodgers as well as encourages them in their criminal activities, giving them protection in return for the lion's share of the booty. He is contemptuous of every one and hated by all. His acci-

dental death saddens none. Both Vassilisa and Kostilyoff are evil characters and custodians of an evil system of values. They suck their lodgers, torment others and are destructive in all their dealings and relationships.

These two characters are presented as types and with obvious indictment. But in the creation of other characters, Gorky exhibits a greater degree of involvement coupled with greater originality of conception and spontaneity of presentation. His approach is characterized by a blend of objectivity and compassion, irony and pathos, moral idealism and ruthless realism, resulting in lively and unique artistic creations. Although bound together in a common destiny, these characters exhibit a remarkable degree of variety in their personalities, temperaments and thinking. Kavashnaya, a poor widow, is perhaps the most normal kind of person in this group, and as such, full of contradictions. She is cunning but kind hearted, simple, frank and witty, worldly but vulnerable. Her first marriage was a disaster and so, quite naturally, she resists a second involvement, but finally, succumbs to the temptation. Her second marriage, too, is a fiasco. Instead of protecting and helping her, her second husband Miedviedieff, the Policeman, gives up his job and begins living off her income, drinking away all her savings. Miedviedieff is a flabby, fussy and pretentious person, who speaks in clichés and truisms and is proud of his position and family connections. But, infact, he is quite incompetent and totally ineffectual. He is, however, closer to the lodgers than to the landlady and her husband. Altogether a funny, harmless and inconsequential man, he is portrayed with a mixture of irony, humour and mild indictment.

The Baron, on the other hand, is an absurd man and a failure. He has lost, not only his wealth and position, but his very sense of human dignity. His absurd pride in his past glory is counterbalanced with his acute sense of his present degradation. Confused about his past, ill at ease in the present and afraid of the future, he lives on others like a parasite, drowning his despair in cards and drinks. He has an uncanny feeling that he has done nothing all his life except changing clothes to play various roles, and all this happened as though in a dream. The following speech of the Baron is interesting in many ways:

Baron :You know as far back as I can remember, there's been a sort of fog in my brain. I was never able to understand anything. Somehow I feel embarrassed... it seems to me that all my life, I have done nothing but changed clothes - and why? I don't understand. I studied- I wore the uniform of the Institute for the Sons of Nobility.. but what have I learnt? I married - - I wore a frock coat - then a dressing gown ... but I chose a disagreeable wife - and why? I don't understand. I squandered everything I possessed.... I wore some sort of grey jacket and brick coloured trousers - But how did I happen to ruin myself? I haven't the slightest idea... I had a position in the Department of State -- I wore a cap with the insignia of rank - I embezzled Gov't funds... so they dressed me in a convict's garb and

later on I got into these clothes here... and it all happened as in a dream. It's funny." [6]

The Baron is obviously embarrassed as he has never been able to relate himself to anything in a meaningful way, and bewildered, for he is unable to discover his identity in the thicket of masks he wore and the roles he willy nilly played all his life. This is an interesting observation exhibiting a sensibility ahead of its time and not only suggesting the existentialist concept of authentic and unauthentic existence but also curiously foreshadowing the Pirandellian concept of the "the mask and the face", "illusion and reality" so effectively dramatized by him in plays like *Henry IV*, *The Naked* and *So It Is If You Think So*.

Like the Baron, the Actor, too, is a failure and a drop out. He, too, lives off others, borrowing money right and left and squandering it on drinks. An alcoholic, he is absurdly proud of his diseased organism but also knows that it has been undoing as an artist. He confesses to Luka:

Actor: Formerly, before my organism was poisoned, old man, I had a good memory. But now it is all over with me. Brother, I used to declaim these verses with tremendous success — thunders of applause - you have no idea what applause means. It goes to your head like vodka. I'd step out on the stage like this (strikes a pose)... I cannot remember a word. I cannot remember my favourite lines... isn't it ghastly old man?[9]

And Luka admits that it is terrible, "for your very soul is in the thing you love." The Actor confesses that he has" drank away his soul", and all this happened because he had no faith in himself, and according to him talent without faith is a misnomer. What is worse, he has lost his name – his sense of identity, and in his opinion, "to be nameless is not to exist". He is only a shadow of himself - an "Actor" without a role to play!

Here, too, Gorky seems to be ahead of his times in suggesting and effectively dramatizing the existentialist concept of authentic and unauthentic existence, according to which, only meaningful choices and creative enterprises can lend value and definition to man's contingent existence. And since the Actor has not been able to authenticate his existence, it is quite natural for him to be lured away by Luka's fancy ideas about a wonderful hospital "somewhere", where "they" cure diseased organisms. Inspired by him, he gives up drinking and decides to go in search of the hospital to be cured and start life anew. But when told by others that no such hospital exists anywhere in the country, he goes out and hangs himself, which can be seen as a theatrical gesture of protest against the very conditions of existence.

Pepel, the thief, is something of an idealist and a romantic soul. He is tired of his sordid affair with Vassilisa. It fills him with disgust as Vassilisa has no soul. He longs for a more meaningful relationship with her younger sister Natasha who is simple and honest. He is generous and kind hearted and constantly lending money to others, particularly to the Actor and Satine, whom he admires for their wit and talent. But he holds no brief for conventional mo-

rality. According to him," honour and conscience are needed by those who have power and energy – they are for the rich." As for him, he knows that being the son of a thief, he is condemned to be a thief. My way is clear", he tells his fellows, " my father spent all his life in prison and I inherited the trait. Even when I was a small child, they called me a thief – a thief's son." And so we see that it was a society that branded him a thief and the growing boy had no option but to assume the role assigned to him by his world. He is even proud of his position as an outsider and contemptuous of those who try to live by " honest labour", thus strengthening the false pretensions of an essentially unjust system. Do we not see here a hint of Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of Jean Genet's character, as a thief and a homosexual, in his famous biography of the controversial writer, entitled Saint Genet? Pepel however, is not so confirmed in his self definition as Genet: and lured by Luka, he decides to give up his criminal activities, marry Natasha and go to Siberia to start life anew. This pious resolve comes to naught as after the accidental murder of Kostilioff, he is alienated from Natasha, who suspects him of being in league with her sister and instead of marriage and migration, he finds himself landing in a prison house, thus fulfilling his tragic predicament.

Natasha, the young woman, in whom Pepel is interested, is a simple and helpless creature. She is kind to people in distress, but is herself is a victim of her sister's avarice and cruelty, who makes her work like a slave and beats her up in the bargain. Natasha is a weak and vulnerable person – a frightened soul – and is unable to cope with the bitter realities of her painful situation. Consequently she tends

to find satisfaction in illusions and dreams. She dreams of Prince Charming appearing from nowhere and taking her away, or else, something wonderful happening and changing the entire pattern of life around her. But in her more depressive moments she thinks that it is pointless to dream of happiness and wonders if anyone can, at all, be happy in this life. Touched by Pepel's sincere emotions, she agrees to marry him and go away to Siberia with him. But their dream of happiness is nipped in the bud by the vicious designs and cruel revenge of her sister. Her extreme pain and bewilderment and suspicion of Pepel, arising from his unintentional murder of her brother-in-law, throw her out of balance. She loses faith in everything and walks away from the hospital to some unknown destination. This is all we hear about her in the last act.

Nastaya, the down and out prostitute, takes this tendency of escape and illusion to its absurd limits. She cries over sentimental novels and projects herself into the romantic stories. Her sordid life is devoid of love, tenderness, honour and glamour. But she imagines all these things for herself. She dreams that a high born passionate youth was once in love with her and was willing to die for her. Her high flown account of this imaginary romance is both touching and absurd. She tells the company:

> So then at night he came into the garden. I had been waiting for him quite a while. I trembled with fear and grief. He trembled, too...He was white as chalk...and he had the

> pistol in his hand…I said to him—"Joy of my life, my bright moon…I cannot live without you because I love you madly…and I shall keep on loving you as long as my heart beats in my bosom…But don't take your young life…Better that I should perish from longing for you." etc, etc.[10]

No one, of course, believes in her stories, for they know that these fancy ideas are lifted from the sentimental novels that she is always immersed in. But she believes in them and resents violently if anyone questions their validity. Bubnoff, with his usual cynical sharpness, remarks that Nastaya is "used to painting that mutt of hers, and now she wants to paint her soul too, put rouge on her soul." But the Baron, more perceptively, remarks that," All people have drab colour souls and they like to brighten them up a little." Only Luka, with a message of hope for every one, assures her that her stories are true, if she sincerely believes in them. But deep down within herself Nastaya knows that her life is desperate, and there is nothing for her to do, but to cry and drink -drink and cry again…that is all there is to it." she confesses.

On the other hand, Kleshtch, a poor locksmith, is neither a criminal nor a parasite. He is not even a dreamer. And yet, he too, is a social outcaste and his life is devoid of security or comfort. He tries to earn his bread by honest work. But it is of no avail. He is penniless and can provide, neither himself nor his ailing wife with food or shelter. He is not even in a position to give her a decent funeral when she

dies. As a result he is bitter and critical of everyone. His narrow outlook, self righteousness and pride in his "honest labour" make him quite unpopular among the lodgers. His self pity, bitterness and insensitiveness to his wife's sufferings, too, underscore him as an unpleasant fellow. His pride in his honest work is ironic in the context. Every one complains of his unpleasant and screechy work, which appears to be an outward expression of his stern temperament. Satine and Pepel advise him to give up his work and live on others .But Kleshtch wins our sympathy for he is "more sinned against than sinning". Altogether he is a living indictment of social injustice and economic exploitation; of a society, which not only thrives on the miseries of the down trodden, but also tends to misshape human personality.

Anna, the consumptive wife of Kleshtch, is a dying woman for whom life has been a prolonged spell of suffering and deprivations. Her account of her own life is heart rending, " I cannot remember a single day", she tells Luka, "when I did not go hungry — I have been afraid, waking, eating and sleeping, all my life I've trembled, afraid I wouldn't get another bite - All my life I've been in rags - all through my reached life - and why? "... Neglected by her husband, who has always been cruel to her, ignored or hurt by others, pitied by Natasha and Kavashnaya and befriended by Luka, who helps her to die peacefully, Anna creates a haunting dramatic image, epitomizing the sufferings and privations of this neglected lot.

Bubnoff, the cap maker too, is a worker like Kleshtch, but he does not set much store by his honest labour. He is closer to the tramps and parasites in his approach to life

and admits that he is lazy, hates work and once he starts drinking, "can drink away every thing in sight. "Betrayed by his wife and the boss, who seduced her, he continues to live beneath subsistence level and has accepted life in a spirit of open eyed cynicism. He has no use for dreams and illusions and Luka's account of "the land of righteousness" is no more than a fairy tale for him. Cynical and perceptive, he paints a vivid picture of the group, with ruthless and perceptive insights in its social and existential position.

> Bubnoff: What is over is over, remain only trivi alities. We know no class distinction here. We have shed all pride and self respect. Blood and bone... Man, Just plain Man! ... that's what we are...[11]

His remarks bring to mind the world of Absurd Drama where Man is stripped of his social and moral trappings and seen in the stark nakedness of his existential predicament. The two tramps in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are perhaps, the most striking example of that and the following dialogue from *Godot* is one of the many that paint a similar picture of Man:

Estragon:	And we?
Vladimir:	I don't understand.
Estragon:	Where do we come in?
Vladimir:	Come in? On our hands and knees.
Estragon:	As bad as that?
Vladimir:	Your worship wants to assert

his prerogatives?
Estragon: We've no rights anymore?
Vladimir: You'd make me laugh if it were not prohibited.
Estragon: We've lost our rights?
Vladimir: (distinctly) We got rid of them." [12]
(Waiting for Godot)

Similarly the following dialogue in *The Lower Depths*, too, evokes the atmosphere of Waiting for Godot, underlining man's insecurity and exposure to cruel forces beyond his reach or comprehension:

Satine: Who beat me up yesterday?
Bubnoff: Does it make a difference who?
Satine: Suppose they did, but why did they?
Bubnoff: Were you playing cards?
Satine: Scoundrels!
Actor: One of these days they will beat you to death.
Satine: You are a jackass.
Actor: Why?
Satine: Because a man can die only once.
(The Lower Depths)

How close is this dialogue, both in spirit and diction, to the following in *Waiting for Godot*:

Vladimir: May one enquire where his highness spent the night?
Estragon: In a ditch.

Vladimir: A ditch? Where?
Estragon: (Without gesture) Over there.
Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?
Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they did.
Vladimir: When I think of it... all these years...but for me... where would you be? You would be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present moment, no doubt about that.
Estragon: And what of it? ..." *(Waiting for Godot)*

The two extracts are surprisingly close to each other both in theme and its dramatic treatment, except for the last line in each case, which brings out the difference in the philosophical approaches of the two authors. Estragon's remark, "And what of it?" conveys a sense of utter hopelessness and absurdity, while Satine's, "Because a man can die only once. " is an oblique assertion of his human dignity as well as a perception of some pattern in existence.

Satine, however, is one of the strongest and most positive characters in the play, but there are others who come closer to a perception of absurdity and it has been hinted at in relation to Bubnoff, the Actor and the Baron. Another such character is Alyoshka, the crazy shoemaker who acknowledges himself to be desperate man and yet is gay for he knows that none is better than himself. For him the funeral march is "refreshing music" and life a desperate, funny and pointless venture. But this need not lead us to the conclusion that *The Lower Depths* embodies a vision

of despair and absurdity, for Gorky paints a picture of extreme suffering, desperation and man's imprisonment in a cruel destiny and then takes us beyond it.

From this group of desperate, touching, teasing and surprisingly articulate people, two characters, viz., Satine and Luka, stand out by virtue of their more definite outlooks and deeper involvement in problems concerning humanity at large. They are also the chief spokesmen in the brilliant debate of ideas that interpenetrates the play, touching upon the questions of illusion and reality, dignity of man and possibilities of human existence, social injustice and moral values, worth of human labour and need for revolutionary upheaval, pity for human suffering and ruthless confrontation of reality with courage and equanimity, religious faith and faith in Man's power to change the world.

Luka is a solitary old traveller who believes that, "one place is like another as long as it keeps an old fellow warm" and that man cannot be but a tramp since, "the very earth we walk upon is a tramp in the universe." He is an exponent of Christian pity and has a message of hope for every one. He advises the sinners, consoles the sufferers and gives vague hopes to those who can swallow them. He pities and consoles the dying Anna, telling her that death is kindly and sweeps away all suffering: it is only rest, peace and everlasting bliss. He tells the disappointed people that, "a human being can do everything if only he makes up his mind to do so." But his solutions to the human problems are often too idealistic, vague and unrelated to the concrete realities of existence and his facile but confused advices often lead to

tragic consequences. The suicide of the Actor is a case in point and so is the unfortunate end of Pepel and Natasha. His philosophy of life, too, is facile and arbitrary. According to him, "He who seeks, will find: he who desires strongly, will find." He encourages Nastaya to cherish her illusions. "If you believe you had a real love affair, then you did," is his simple logic. He confesses that he does not have much use for truth, "for truth does not always heal a wounded soul... indeed it may even spell out death" for some people like Pepel. His religious philosophy, too, is simple and naive. "If you believe, there is God, if you don't, there is not. Whatever you believe, that thing exists."

Luka's character is partly revealed in his statements, generalizations and interactions with other characters, and partly built up and analysed through the comments and reactions of other, after he has left. In the last act, whatever little "historical action" (in the Pirandellian sense) the drama contained, is over but the "philosophical action" continues; much of the discussion among the remaining characters converges on the personality of Luka and the value of his way of life. Kleshetch is critical of him and points out that, "he didn't like truth, in fact, he strongly resented it." The Baron characterizes him as a "fool and a humbug". On the other hand Nastaya confesses that she fell in love with him and worships him as a paragon of virtue. The Tartar, too, is full of admiration for him, for according to him Luka's morality was implacable and "The Law of life was the law of his heart". Satine, on the other hand, seems to be appreciative of his personality and yet critical of his approach to

human problems. He asserts that" the old man was no humbug," for he understood Man and believed in his potential and striving for perfection. He lied, no doubt, but he lied out of sheer pity for the weak and suffering people. But Satine is not taken in by his high sounding idealism, his "land of righteousness" and his message of hope and peace for everyone, which often amounts to an encouragement of weakness, illusions and moral cowardice. According to Satine, Luka's philosophy was "mush for those who can't chew". But, interestingly enough, the contradictions and ambiguities in Luka's position stimulate Satine to work out his thoughts and he admits that, "The old man affected me as acid affects a dirty, old silver coin."

Satine has a passion for truth. he admits that people can lie, "beautifully, inspiringly, stirringly, "and also that, "some lies bring comfort, others bring peace," but he also knows that, "a lie alone can justify the burden that crushes the workman and condemns those that are starving". According to him only the weaklings, parasites and exploiters need lies, "lies are their shield, their support, their armour." But the man who is free and does not suck his neighbor's blood, needs no lies to justify his existence. In his own words, "To lie, it is the trade of slaves and masters of slaves. Truth is the religion of the free man." But Satine's concept of freedom is complex and inseparable from the total responsibility of Man for his thoughts, actions and moral choices. According to him a man may believe or not, but he has to pay for both, and that is precisely why he is free. Similarly, his oncept of responsibility, too, is different from the conven-

tional ideas of duty and conscience. He believes that the ideal of "honest work" in an unjust society, is next to impossible. His advice to Kleshtch is to give up work, to "do nothing and be a burden to the world at large". And why should he be ashamed of doing nothing when "people are not ashamed to let him live like a dog". His classic Marxist argument is that if Kleshtch struck work and all those who sweat for others and produce value, did likewise, then the unjust system is bound to collapse, making a revolutionary transformation of society inevitable. Satine an ex-convict, who was sentenced for defending the honour of his sister, is now himself, a parasite, living and drinking on others. But he seems to lack neither vitality nor a sense of values and would be glad to work if it were not so degrading. "Make work pleasant, and maybe I'll work too." Indeed he believes that," When work is a pleasure, life, too, is a pleasure, when it is toil, life too is a drudge." But Satine's revolutionary outlook is frought with idealism and, for him, physical needs and economic problems constitute just one dimension of the total man. He tells his fellows, "I've always despised people who worry too much about their bellies. It isn't right. Man in loftier than that. Man stands above hunger. Like Nietzeche and Shaw he believes that, "Man was born to conceive a better Man". In short, Satine is a singer of Man's glory and a prophet of his ascendance and for him Man is the ultimate measure of all values. In this inspired speech towards the end of the play he comes very close to being the spokesman of his creator's philosophy:

Satine: Man is – truth... It is tremendous. It contains the beginning and the end of everything – everything is in Man – and everything exists for him! Man alone exists,everything else is the creation of his hands and his brain!Man! It is glorious! It sounds so big! Man must be respected not degraded with pity, but respected... Let's drink to Man.[13]

Satine's inspired statements in the last act of the play raise it to a higher level of social and philosophical affirmation and also dispel the gloom of the earlier action. The inmates of the dingy inn are able to rise above the squalor of their surroundings and see straight into future with joy and confidence. But Gorky's optimism is way apart from the facile and vague optimism of Luka, and the Actor's suicide, with which the play ends, bears testimony to the complexity of his vision. It is not merely a dramatic surprise, reserved by Gorky for the curtain line, but a significant pointer that brings us back, with a shock, from the glorious vision of the future to the painful realities of the present moment, thus underlining the phenomenon of wastage and the need for radical transformation of society. And this convergence of joy, pathos, irony and idealism on a point of maximum intensity constitutes a fitting finale of this rich dramatic expe-rience.

In *The Lower Depths* Gorky maintains a delicate balance between reality and dream, hope and despair, violence and compassion, irony and pathos, faith and irreverence,

social protest and existential probings, moral idealism and revolutionary zeal, ruthless realism and symbolic suggestions. The play has, by and large, a realistic framework, with surprisingly unique and boldly drawn realistic characters. As Alexander Bakshy points out:

> The action of the play is laid in a Volga town at the turn of the century... The characters are representatives of the type known in Russia as bosyak, the name literally meaning "a barefoot" having come to be applied to the whole class of people, who did occasional odd jobs, but live mostly by their wits. They formed a motley, shiftless and often criminal fringe of the population of most Russian towns and used to be particularly numerous in port towns. [14]

But this should not lead us to conclude that *The Lower Depths* is a historical treatise or a case study of a certain section of society, for, above all *The Lower Depths* is a profoundly significant artistic statement of social and moral protest. The characters, as Helene Muchnich point out, are extremely well chosen, for "the dregs of society as marks of extreme failure are distress signals, which urge inquiry into the nature of human disaster and responsibility for it." [15] But Gorky's protest is untouched by self pity or personal bitterness. It is authenticated by his close observation of reality and enlivened by his idealism. As Alexander Bakshy

points out:

> Gorky pictured the world of social derelicts and outcasts whose very existence was a reproof of the existing social order, but who, surprisingly enough, were portrayed as superior beings, rising above their melancholy conditions to give free play to their passions, to pour contempt on the weak and squeamish and to glory in their personal power and freedom conventional restraints.

In depicting these characters and their world in this spirit, Gorky was able to reflect the undercurrent of hope and expectations along with social protest and impatience with the existing order, prevalent on the eve of the Russian Revolution. And it was for this reason that Gorky became the hero of the day and a symbol of the revolutionary protest against the existing social order.

As pointed above *The Lower Depths* is a realistic drama. But reality is conceived with so much intensity and imaginative penetration and rendered with such dramatic force that the vision of life seems to overflow its realistic framework and the characters to transcend their appointed roles to become symbolic projections of humanity itself. Stripped of their social trappings and conventional respectability, these characters seem to represent Man in his essential nakedness and vulnerability as well as his immense latent potential. Similarly, other details, too, operate both on

realistic and symbolic levels. The setting itself, based on an acute observation of reality, partakes a symbolic significance, projecting man's entrapment in confining circumstances. Likewise, Bubnoff's rotten thread that defeats his earnest efforts to make a cap becomes a symbol of the rotten social order, in which, honest labour is doomed. Baron's chariots, on the other hand, are a symbol of an obsolete system, for "one cannot ride in a chariot of the past". Repeated failures and ironic outcomes of Luka's well intentioned advices, on the other hand, symbolically suggest that the situation is past reform and calls for a radical transformation. The Actor's suicide is a symbol of the waste inevitable in an irrational and inhuman system as well as of the annihilation of the weak in a bitter struggle for survival.

The Lower Depths has been compared to Tolstoy's play, *The Power of Darkness*. Both the works employ grim realism, touched by moral fervour. Both have an atmosphere of violence and despair. *The Power of Darkness* is an intensely moving play embodying a vision of suffering and sin, while *The Lower Depths* abounds in social criticism and moral protest. It surpasses the earlier play in the richness of its texture and immediacy of dramatic experience. In these respects Gorky's masterpiece is closer to the plays of Chekhov. The ebb and flow of life, orchestration of themes, characters and ideas, casualness of action and dialogue, absence of a neat plot or a central character are some of the Chekhovian qualities in *The Lower Depths*. But when all is said, it is only fair to point out that Chekhov's plays far surpass Gorky's in the mastery of form, refinement of technique, subtle interplay

of moods and feelings, unique blend of irony and pathos, lyricism and poetic quality, complexity of vision and a more sophisticated approach to symbolism resulting in richer nuances of meaning. Furthermore, Chekhov is not only the greater artist of the two, but also a more significant influence on the modern avant-garde drama. But as the above analysis shows, *The Lower Depths* is not only a powerful and authentic work in its own right, but also contains some germinative ideas that were further developed, refined and more consciously employed by the later writers and dramatists. In the subsequent pages of this study I propose to develop this point a little further, for, it seems to me, that the full significance of *The Lower Depths* and the secret of its undiminished power and popularity can best be understood in terms of its closeness to certain recurring themes and symbols in modern and contemporary theatre.

The play that first comes to mind is O'Neill's, *The Iceman Cometh*. There is a striking resemblance in the themes, characters and the setting of the two plays. The scene of action in *The Iceman* is Harry Hope's saloon-dingy, closed and cut off from the outside, like the basement lodging in *The Lower Depths*. Its inmates and frequenters, too, are the outcasts and dregs of society, loosely bound together by despair and a common need to escape into a world of illusions and dreams. 'This is for them the last harbour as they can go no further. 'Unable to cope with the bitter complicated realities of the present, they keep up the appearance of life, with a few harmless pipe dreams about yesterdays and tomorrows. Like Gorky, O'Neill has chosen his protago-

nists from the humblest conditions of life, in order to show mankind at the extremity of its fate. Like him, too, he has multiplied them in order to explore and illuminate every aspect of his theme. We also notice a certain similarity in the composition of the group. Hicky is the counterpart of Luka, but unlike him, he urges the inhabitants to face reality. Satine, too, has a counterpart, Larry, who is of the group, but also somewhat detached from it. He comments upon the action and interprets the motives of other characters. But Larry's philosophical detachment has not produced philosophical calm, for he is unable to choose. His fear of life, nihilism and self loathing is in sharp contrast to the buoyant enthusiasm and cheerful faith of Satine.

Apart from these obvious similarities, we also notice a certain affinity in the theme and philosophical arguments of the two plays. Both raise questions about the nature of truth and the value of illusion, about the theories of life and the actuality of living, about the value of hope and the limits of hope. Both make inquiries into the nature of evil and the possibility of an ethics in a desperate situation. But a closer look at *The Iceman Cometh* makes it clear that O'Neill is using Gorky's play, primarily, not as a model but as a point of departure. Consequently, the dissimilarities between the two plays are almost as striking as the similarities. Gorky's approach is social, ethical and humanistic: O'Neill's is psychological, metaphysical and existential. The questions asked in both the plays are much alike but the answers suggested are strikingly dissimilar. Gorky asserts a humanistic faith in the revolutionary transformation of society, while

O'Neill dramatizes" the impossibility of salvation in a world without God." *The Iceman Cometh,* in Robert Brustein's words is "an expression of existential revolt structured in quasi-religious terms" Gorky's play ends on a happy note, O'Neill's ends on a dark one and can also be interpreted as a dramatization of the death wish, deep rooted, as Freud says, in the human psyche. According to Gorky it is difficult but possible and imperative to face truth: according to O'Neill illusions and pipe dreams are useless, but tragically inescapable, for truth is not so easily definable. There is a constant clash between the reality of the inner world, reality of facts and reality of conceptions and the reality of the inner world might spell out death.

This preoccupation with reality versus illusion is a recurring theme in the entire gamut of contemporary and modern theatre and the most elaborate treatment of this is to be found in the works of Luigi Pirandello. Most of his well known plays, like *Six Characters in Search of an Author, Naked, So It Is If You Think So, The Life I Gave You,* and *Tonight We Improvise,* pivot on the theme of illusion versus reality, the mask and the face. He is obsessed with the idea of the elusiveness of human personality and the desperate need for permanence, and plays many variations on this theme, exploring its tragic implications with dark comic undertones. The tragic essence of life lies in the contrast between the warm, fluid but elusive quality of life and the stability of cold concepts and forms. Art, which is perfect form, crystallizes life, but also dwarfs it. This is the theme of *Six Characters,* his best known work. We have already seen how some

of these themes are foreshadowed in *The Lower Depths*, particularly in the Baron's confessions.

This theme of illusion and reality finds a philosophical, pondering expression in the plays of Samuel Beckett. Reality of the outer world becomes dead as the psychic realities overwhelm the protagonists *(Endgame)* and Man has to support his incomprehensible and unbearable existence with an illusion *(Waiting for Godot)*. This theme is given a bold, imaginative and often hilarious treatment in the plays of Eugene Ionesco. The best example of this, perhaps, is *The Chairs*, in which proliferation of the chairs and absence of occupants creates a sense of mystery and bewilderment. Jean Genet's treatment of this theme is esoteric but powerful. *The Maids*, *The Balcony* and *The Blacks* are some the plays that can be cited as examples of Genet's preoccupation with the question of illusion and reality. This theme also finds a grim and eerie expression in the plays of Harold Pinter, and Edward Albee plays interesting variations on this theme in his well known plays like *Tiny Alice* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. In short this is one of the most frequently recurring themes in the so called Theatre of the Absurd.

Apart from the theme of illusion and reality, certain other important themes of subsequent drama, are foreshadowed in *The Lower Depths*. One of these is the question of human freedom and responsibility. This is a very important theme in the plays of Jean Anouilh and quite central to the existentialist drama of Sartre and Camus. According to the existentialists, man is not only free, he is condemned to be free. He cannot choose his freedom but he can make it mean-

ingful through his choices and commitments. The only other alternative to a meaningful and responsible freedom, is an unauthentic existence, which is projected in a number of existentialist plays, but most particularly in Sartre's *No Exit*, which is a kind of living hell, for the three protagonists have lost the capacity to change or to enter into meaningful relationships with others. Neither do they have the courage to go out alone in the dark and thus give some meaning to their freedom. The theme of freedom and responsibility is essential to a large number of existentialist plays, but is given its most extensive treatment in Sartre's play *The Flies*, in which the author is particularly preoccupied with the question of engaged freedom and human responsibility. It has already been pointed out that the question of freedom and responsibility constitutes an important element in the thematic structure of *The Lower Depths*. It is interesting to note that Gorky's approach to this problem is quite close to the existentialist approach to the questions of freedom and responsibility. These words of Satine, for example, in the last act of *The Lower Depths* have a curious existentialist ring:

> A man may believe or not believe, that is his personal affair – A man is Free – he pays for every thing himself — belief or unbelief – love – wisdom – a man pays for everything, and that is just why he free.[18]

and bring to mind Orestes' words to Zeus in Sartre's play – *The Flies*:

> Neither slave nor master, I am my freedom.

> No sooner had you created me than I ceased to be yours... I shall not return under your law, I'm doomed to have no other law but mine – for I, Zeus, am a man and every man must find out his own way." [19].

Orestes not only asserts his independence of an external arbitrary law but also claims his crime to be entirely his own, describing it as, "my glory, my life's work." He accepts full responsibility for his deed and is ready to face the consequences of his choice.

As in its themes and intellectual preoccupations, so also in settings and dramatic approach, *The Lower Depths* foreshadows later developments and suggests some characteristic features of the new wave in drama. The cave like cellar in *The Lower Depths*, where the ceiling merges in to the low stone walls, and "The Waste" of Act III, strewn with rubbish and overgrown with weeds and surrounded by a high brick wall, elder bushes and a dark wooden wall that shuts out the light of the sky, are acute recreations of reality, but they also have symbolic force, and contribute to create an image of the human predicament.

The setting of a closed space, cut off from the outside world, has assumed the significance of a powerful dramatic metaphor in modern drama, projecting and symbolizing human predicament. In his well known play – *Henry IV*, Pirandello devised the setting of the fake palace, closed and cut from time and external reality in which a fake Henry is self imprisoned in a lucid madness, thus creating a pow-

erful dramatic metaphor which embodies his favourite themes of time and evanescence, illusion and reality, the mask and the face. Similarly in Beckett's play *Endgame*, the scene is a closed hall with only two small windows, high up in the rear wall. The world outside is dead and time has come to a stop – it is perpetually grey. The play confronts us with a psychic state of deadness that may be experienced by an individual at some stage of his life. The outside world goes dead for the victim, who feels completely unrelated, but inside his mind there is a ceaseless argument between various parts of his personality that assume autonomous existence.

Similarly, in several plays of Ionesco, the setting of the closed space is employed to create an image of human situation. In *The Chairs*, the circular hall is surrounded by water on all sides and cut off from the rest of the world, and the guests invited by the old couple are non existent. The play projects a state of tragic isolation and unfolds a world of failures and futile dreams, illusions and regrets. In *Amadee*, the husband and wife have not left the room for than a decade. In the foreground, Amadee is desperately trying to write a play, but in several years, has not gone beyond two lines, while in the background a huge corpse is constantly growing and spreading mushrooms. The drama projects an inner state of guilt and deadness in which the sources of creativity are dried up and human will paralyzed. Similarly in his other plays like, *Exit The King* and *New Tenant*, the closed setting is used for symbolic purposes.

Like Beckett and Ionesco, a number of other absurd

dramatists also use the setting of the closed room or hall to create a dramatic metaphor. In Genet's play, *The Maids*, the two maids carry on an elaborate ritual of impersonation in a closed room. In the plays of Pinter this setting is used with great dramatic force. It is both a symbol of his character's isolation and a haven of refuge for them. But this protected haven is too fragile and is constantly threatened by external forces – violent, mysterious and inexplicable. In several of his plays like *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* this grim comedy of menace is enacted in a setting of closed room or basement.

In certain existentialist plays, too, the setting of the closed room is used to convey certain states of mind and the central philosophical content.

In Sartre's two plays – *The Condemned of Altona* and *No Exit*, the closed setting is a visual metaphor for his characters' isolation and unauthentic existence. In *No Exit*, the hell, which is a closed room imprisoning three persons for eternity, is a negation of freedom and the final extinction of a possibility of dynamic existence and creative choices. The tragic dilemma of the three characters lies in their desperate need for self definition through the agency of others and the impossibility of such a definition.

Such examples can be multiplied. But they do not necessarily prove a direct influence of Gorky on contemporary and recent drama. In fact the difference between *The Lower Depths* and the plays mentioned above are as striking as their similarities. These plays are by and large more experimental, symbolic and non-realistic than drama in the

first decades of this century, and they often dramatize more complex and metaphysical themes and explore more elusive states of human psyche. The questions asked in these plays are more complicated and the answers suggested less certain: and sometime there are no answers at all. However the freshness of approach in *The Lower Depths* and diversity of its intellectual, moral and psychological preoccupations, makes it rich in suggestiveness and nuances and, as shown above some of the later developments are reflected here in an embryo form. As such *The Lower Depths* is a significant landmark in the history of modern drama. But it is also important to note that *The Lower Depths* too, reveals its full richness and dimensionality in the light of significant developments in subsequent drama, which bears testimony to its undiminished freshness and extraordinary vitality. Talking of a "synthetic artistic image" Mikhail Khrapchenko writes:

> Besides every thing else, a synthetic artistic image has the notable property of being capable of attracting and absorbing fresh phenomena of reality ... these phenomena of reality endow it with a new quality, enriching and transforming it in the perception of ensuing generation of readers, viewers and listeners.This is possible because, in its most various manifestations, life literally pulsates in an artistic image.

Wilson Knight has characterized Shakespeare's plays as "extended metaphors" and in the light of the above defi-

nition, we may characterize *The Lower Depths* as an "extended artistic image".

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Shakespeare's Theatrical Cleopatra and Cleopatra, the Politician in History.

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety: other women cloy
> The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry,
> Where most she satisfies.
> (*Antony and Cleopatra* II, p.1165)[1]

Enobarbus's famous eulogy, in William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), sums up the legend of Cleopatra. From the time of Chaucer till the age of George Bernard Shaw, Cleopatra's character has intrigued many historians as well as literary artists across the world. This paper analyses the character of Cleopatra as presented by Shakespeare in his play *Antony and Cleopatra* and as presented in historical documents. In the process, the paper also examines Shakespeare's attitude towards her and looks into the specific social, historical and political context of the time which might have influenced his imagination in creating Cleopatra's character.

In the Elizabethan Age dramatists wrote for an audience fascinated by the question of women's political capability. Sixteenth century Europe saw many female sovereigns including Bloody Mary Tudor, Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I herself. But none of the dramatists ventured to write about the female as ruler in their writings

except Shakespeare who wrote *Antony and Cleopatra*, though a bit late, to comment upon many dominant political and social ideologies of the time concerning gender-relations and identities. But even he avoids the political aspect of Cleopatra's story. In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare seems to focus more on the personal relationship of the lovers to develop the character of Cleopatra than on her political ambitions, which as is indicated in the historical documents, influenced her relationships both with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Cleopatra, in history, is remembered more for her shrewd political manoeuvres, which Shakespeare completely misses out, may be for certain political reasons. On the contrary he presents her as an insecure ageing woman who manoeuvres things only to get the attention of her lover. He makes her a sort of actor cum stage manager and celebrates her theatricality and sensuality which seem to subvert the cultural orthodoxies of his own time which saw the woman as outside the social and political domain.

In the Renaissance period many misogynistic writers denigrated woman. Woman was considered a creature of weak 'reason' and strong 'passion'. This is the dominant male discourse of the time which Shakespeare challenges by creating the character of Cleopatra. For she is not just a symbol of womanhood, of female sovereignty but also of racial difference and of subjected nationhood. In Cleopatra's character Shakespeare invokes the ultimate erotic oriental femininity. Shakespeare also shows a similarity between the attitude of the Romans towards Egypt and the English attitude towards the Orient, for the ancient Rome and Jaco-

bean England shared the similar expansionist political strategies.

At the same time Shakespeare also presents the resemblance between the masculine ideology of Renaissance England and Roman attitude to Cleopatra. In this connection Jyotsyna Singh, in her essay, writes:

> Implicit to the Roman ideology of exclusion is a fear of the loss of male identity through an attraction to the female. The picture of a threatened masculinity the Roman construct seems to give validity to the anti-theatrical and anti-feminist polemic, especially in its negative associations between female charms and duplicitous shows. The Egyptian queen's 'infinite variety', as they portray it, applies interchangeably to her sexual appeal and to her role playing and is clearly antithetical to the Roman myth of a stable and unified male subject.[2]

It is this 'stable and unified' male identity which Shakespeare challenges in his play when he creates the famous cross dressing scene. But as one goes through the play, one notices that after combining theatricality and femininity in such positive and powerful terms in the character of Cleopatra, Shakespeare, in the end, makes her a more conventional figure who called Antony her husband and dies to be with him in the other world. Does this indicate that Shakespeare wanted to rouse the audience's sympathy and respect for

her? These are some major discussions of this paper.

Cleopatra is unique among Shakespeare's female characters in her use of seduction and other feminine wiles like her deliberate attempt at remaining an enigma and her manipulative use of mood changes for the purpose of being fascinating to Antony. Shakespeare's Cleopatra is more concerned about love and several gratifications than about public issues like proper governance. There is a clear undercurrent of fear and insecurity due to ageing for now she is "wrinkled deep in time". She adopts desperate measures to compensate, by being fascinating, for the ravages of age. When Antony is not with her, she sends her attendants to find about his whereabouts and tell them:

> See where he is, who's with him, what he does:
> I did not send you. If you find him sad,
> Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
> That I am sudden sick. Quick, and return.
> (*Antony and Cleopatra* I, p.1158)

Such frivolous manoeovring is shown throughout the play. When Antony is with her, she passes her time by asking him; "if it be love indeed, tell me how much" and if he is away, she thinks only of him. It seems that Cleopatra's importance for Shakespeare is only as the lover or mistress of Antony. He hardly dwells upon her political life as the Queen of Egypt. For Shakespeare, she is the consort of Antony whom Antony lovingly calls "the serpent of old Nile". But if one goes through historical documents, one will see that she was highly educated, interested in literature, conversant

with many languages, a woman of business and skilled organizer who was very popular in Egypt especially with the native Egyptians. In this context Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth write:

> The moral code had little meaning to her; she was her own law. But she was to be a loyal wife to Antony, though certainly she did not love him; perhaps she never loved any man; her two love affairs were undertaken quite deliberately, with the same purpose as all her actions. For the key-note of her character was not sex at all, but ambition- an ambition surpassing that of any other princess of her ambitious Macedonian race and the essence of her nature was the combination of the charm of a woman with the brain of a man, both remorselessly bent to the pursuit of that one object, power.[3]

This description shows her to be a very shrewd politician whose sole aim was to gain independent control over Egypt, for she was a "client-queen" who ruled Egypt under the directions of Rome. Her relations, as the historical account points out, with Caesar and Antony had some reason other than her susceptibility towards promiscuity as the legend has it. For, S.A. Cook and others, in their book, write about her relations with Antony :

> She intended now to make use of him; as to

> his personality she had no choice, for if she wanted power she could only get it through the Roman governor of the East, whoever he might be. Had Antony been a different character, we might have seen a different Cleopatra – perhaps the friend of philosophers, perhaps the business woman who ran a wool-mill with her slave girls; as Antony loved pleasure, we see too much of the Cleopatra who, legend said, wrote a book on coiffures and cosmetics. (CAH, p.39)

She got what she wanted, for Antony made her an independent monarch. She was a man in a woman's body who had power and the brains to employ it to her purpose and the supreme ambition of her life was to rule the Roman world which would have been fulfilled had Julius Caesar not died, and which she later tried to fulfill through Antony. She tried to make herself indispensable to Antony; both to guarantee her existing rule and to pave the way to something larger; she was his comrade in all he did, whether hunting or drinking but only to keep him to herself. For Cleopatra saw Antony as a stepping stone to the fulfillment of her supreme ambition. But Shakespeare does not even allude to this aspect of her character in his play .Here one can say that there could have been certain political motivations which influenced Shakespeare's imagination in subtly sidestepping history. For if he had presented Cleopatra as a hard core politician who can employ any and all means to secure her po-

sition, who knows that there would have been comparisons with the late monarch of England, Queen Elizabeth, who died in 1603. And though Cleopatra was a perfect match to Elizabeth in her political intentions and motivations, her promiscuous character would have been seen as an insult to the untarnished character of the virgin Queen. Elizabeth's reign was called the golden age and she was still revered by the people. Shakespeare could not have dared to play with the emotions of the people, so he creates Cleopatra the mistress of Antony and not the monarch of Egypt.

Though Shakespeare's interest in her is mainly due to her relationship with Antony still he lifts her from the level of caricature, as she was seen earlier, to the level of a fully developed individual and celebrates femininity in its completeness in her character. In Cleopatra's character Shakespeare seems to associate femininity with theatricality in positive terms. But in Renaissance England and ancient Rome, theatricality was associated with disorder and disruptions in the traditional social hierarchies and gender roles. For theatricality gives power to the female, as it gives an upper hand to Cleopatra over all the males especially Romans in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Her histrionic mode of being both reveals and subverts the dominant ideology of the patriarchal system. Whenever Cleopatra is in the scene, she is play-acting. Her exaggerated gestures of love towards Antony are always acted out in front of an audience - like her attendants. She does everything for an effect - her language, actions, emotions are all exaggerated. It is this theatricality which Romans, in the play, detest and are afraid of,

for only with the power of this art Cleopatra has Antony firmly smitten and is also able to fool Octavius Caesar about her real intentions in the end.

Even as Romans devalue her performance, they sometimes recognize its appeal to their sense as Enobarbus does when he describes her first meeting with Antony :

> The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
> Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten
> gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were love-sick with them;.....
> .....For her own person,
> It beggar'd all description; she did lie
> In her pavilion, - cloth of gold, of tissue-
> O'er – picturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature.....
> (*Antony and Cleopatra* II, p.1165)

Here Cleopatra seems to be acting the role of Venus to capture Antony in "her strong toil of grace". This showmanship saves her from humiliation at the hands of Caesar in the end. She calls him her lord and master and in the end stages her own suicide. She even changes her costume for it. 'Show me, my women, like a Queen', she says, 'go fetch my best attires'. She assumes the maternal role to the asps and says "Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,/That sucks the nurse asleep?" And Charmian's dying gesture to straighten her dead queen's crown is a befitting end to the

show of "a princess descended of so many royal Kings". Though Shakespeare celebrates her theatrical power he also condemns it in some other instances like her play acting which leads to Antony's death. So here one can say that Shakespeare maintains an ambivalent attitude towards this aspect of Cleopatra's character. But apart from this incident, one does see him celebrating the theatrical performances of Cleopatra throughout the play. He also shows that her subjects (Egyptians) do appreciate her public appearances as Isis or Aphrodite. Cleopatra had created a cult of her own as Queen Elizabeth had initiated the cult of the Virgin Queen. So, even if the patriarchal order in Renaissance England disapproved "the conflation of the feminine and theatrical" as Singh writes in her essay, Shakespeare celebrates it in a manner which makes one doubt that he might be commenting upon the theatrical aspect of Queen Elizabeth's court itself where the courtly love tradition originated. Court poets like Raleigh and Essex equated Elizabeth I to Daina/Cynthia, the virginal Moon-Goddess. As Rina Ramdev, in her "Introduction", writes:

> Behaviour at Elizabeth's court was consciously artistic, seen in the importance attached to pageants and queen's public appearances. The art of self fashioning was central to Elizabethan court culture, with the monarch herself showing the way.[4]

This statement presents a parallel to the purpose behind

Cleopatra's theatrical gestures in the play. In celebrating Cleopatra's theatricality, Shakespeare might also be reviving the memory of the Elizabethan Court.

In *Antony and Cleopatra,* Romans see Cleopatra as primitive and the racial "other". She is Antony's mistress and not a lawful wedded wife in the play, so she is seen as a gypsy, a strumpet, even Antony calls her "triple-turn'd whore". She is seen as an emasculating force by both the Romans and the Renaissance audience. For both the ancient Rome and the Elizabethan and Jacobean England glorified the masculine virtues of courage, honour and patriotism and women had no role to play in this male world. It is Caesar who articulates the fear of the Romans about the loss of male identity through female attractions when he says:

> ..... he fishes, drinks, and wastes
> The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
> Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
> More womanly than he .....
> (*Antony and Cleopatra* I, p.1160)

Such a scenario was detested by the Renaissance people but Shakespeare seems to acknowledge the power of the female in this play when he shows how Enobarbus mistakes her for Antony, this shows that Cleopatra has no fixed identify, she can be all feminine and coquettish and at the same time can also assume the role of masculine authority. He also shows how Cleopatra delights in her memory of the cross-dressing with Antony. Shakespeare seems to show her dis-

rupt "the sexual hierarchy of the Romans whereby Rome is perceived as a heroic and masculine empire and Egypt a kingdom of women and eunuchs" as Singh writes in her essay. The images that the Romans use for describing Cleopatra are classically Oriental images which bring in focus their attitude towards the Orient which is very colonialist. She is marginalized as the temptress, witch and adulteress. Though Shakespeare does not seem to share this view, still he does expose certain prejudices of his age. In this context Catherine Belsey writes:

> The primary Orientalism of this play consists in locating the East beyond the reach of Law, a realm of pleasure where everything is permitted, where waiting women talk frankly about sex.[5]

This is what Shakespeare does when he shows Cleopatra inhabiting a space outside moral and civil law. She has no sense of regal or feminine propriety. She hops in the streets; she drinks as much as Antony and she beats innocent messengers who bring the news of Antony's marriage with Octavia. Through Shakespeare maintains the conventional attitude towards the Orient but he also attributes some lawlessness to the so called civilised Romans when he shows Lepidus getting drunk during the celebrations following the peace between Pompey and the three triumvirs. And also in *Julius Caesar* when the traitors murder Caesar, the act of washing their hands in Caesar's blood and butchering his

private parts are inhuman. In both these incidents Shakespeare exposes the immoral and cannibalistic tendencies of the Western man as well. Apart from expressing the hypocrisy of the West, *Antony and Cleopatra* also offers a commentary upon the colonialist tendencies of the Jacobean England. During the early portion of the Seventeenth century, England underwent significant changes toward modernization. This process brought forth colonization of many distant places. In 1607 English colonialists in America led by John Smith, established the city of James town, Virginia. The political situation of England also underwent an unprecedented change. Scotland and Wales were brought into the realm of England under the title of "Britain" by King James I. In *Antony and Cleopatra* Octavius Caesar also has a similar purpose i.e. to bring Egypt under the Roman rule and also to take over the treasure of the Ptolemies.

After celebrating her theatrically and her power over the male, in the last act, it looks as if Shakespeare tries to conform Cleopatra to the conventional ideal of the wife and the mother. For throughout the play she is presented as the mistress of Antony, who thinks more of her own self but in the end she is suddenly transformed into a loving wife who is "marble-constant; now the fleeting moon/ No planet is of mine" as she says. Is it because Shakespeare wanted to generate sympathy and respect for her in the minds of the Renaissance audience that he does so? People could only sympathize with her if she died as the loyal wife of Antony. Even if this was his motive, he could have achieved it much before, for as the historical accounts prove that when Antony

returned to Egypt after marrying Octavia he also married Cleopatra in the form the Ptolemies used. And to everyone in the east she was his legitimate wife but this marriage was not acknowledged by the Roman law, as Antony could not have two wives at once. It looks as if even Shakespeare does not acknowledge this marriage or he simply ignores it. For he could celebrate her 'infinite variety' only as a mistress and not as a wife, since wives, like Octavia, offer no variety of emotions to Shakespeare. So one can say here that Shakespeare celebrates the independence of Cleopatra from marital bondage and tries to make her conventional at the end, may be, only to silence the misogynists of his time. But one is not so sure of his success.

In the end, one may conclude that Shakespeare in his presentation of the character of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra,* does maintain an ambivalent attitude and avoids commenting upon her political ambitions, which might have given rise to an inevitable comparison with Elizabeth I. But he does immortalize and celebrate her through her theatrical performances and her free sexuality. Shakespeare's Cleopatra achieves a mythological, metaphysical existence which is beyond textuality itself. On the whole Shakespeare's Cleopatra is still remembered and will always be remembered even if the real one is forgotten.

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Kausar Husain

Communicative Competence Revisited

Conceptualization of the term communicative competence and its different components has been a matter of great interest in SLA since its invocation by Hymes (1972) to contrast it with Chomsky's linguistic competence.[1] Hymes (1972) asserted that in order to communicate in a real – life context one should possess the ability to use not only grammatically correct language, but also language that is socially appropriate. His oft – quoted statement 'There are rules of use without which rules of grammar would be useless' (1972, p. 278) has acquired the status of a maxim.

Hymes's notion of communicative competence was welcomed and accepted whole – heartedly in language teaching circles also as it was viewed as the goal of language instruction. A number of theoretical models have been presented since then to specify its different components. None of the existing theoretical frameworks is however, wholly satisfactory and there seems to be room for further amendment and elaboration. After a brief review of some well – known models of communicative competence, an attempt has been made in the present paper to extend and build upon the original models presented by Canale & Swain (1980, 83)[2]. An important and novel feature of this new model is the introduction of the component of psycholinguistic competence which corresponds with stra-

tegic competence in the existing models, but is subdivided into a number of other new competences.

A Review of Past Models

Canale and Swain's model (1983) is probably the most popular model of all the existing models of communicative competence. This model was an extension of their 1980 model in which they conceptualised three main components of communicative competence: grammatical competence sociolonguistic competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is the same as Chomsky's notion of 'competence', implying linguistic competence, encompassing knowledge of phonological, morphological and syntactical elements of language. Sociolinguistic competence refers to Hymes' idea of communicative competence, that is, the ability to use language appropriately with regard to the given social contexts. By strategic competence, they mean the ability to handle communication in the face of a communication breakdown, through the use of strategies of communication. Canale and Swain revised their scheme in 1983 and added a fourth component to it: discourse competence. By discourse competence they implied the user's ability to achieve cohesion and coherence in connected texts whether spoken or written. This revision of their earlier scheme however, according to the researcher, was unfortunate since there was no need to separate discourse from other elements of language. The ability to connect sentences into

larger wholes should be considered appropriately only as one type of linguistic ability, similar to other types of linguistic competence – phonological, morphological and syntactic, all of which involve some kind of organization of linguistic elements.

Bachman and Palmer's Theoretical Scheme

In their model of communicative competence Bachman and Palmer (1982) posited three main types of competence: grammatical, pragmatic and sociolinguistic (Fig 1)[3]. A major discrepancy in their scheme lies in their isolating vocabulary from other components of grammatical competence and listing it as a component of pragmatic competence along with cohesion and organization. The third main element, sociolinguistic competence consists of register, nativeness and nonliteral language. Here also the term 'nativeness' might raise a number of eyebrows in today's anticolonial world, in which cultures and nations pride themselves on being themselves. Criticizing this concept of 'native speakerness' Leung (2005) remarks that the concept of communicative competence has 'produced abstracted contexts and idealized social rules of use based on (English language) nativespeakerness ... it is imperative for ELT to take notice of real – world social, cultural and language developments in contemporary conditions and to re-engage with a set of reformulated ethnographic sensitivities and sensibilities" (Leung, 2005, p. 119)[4]. Another important lacuna in

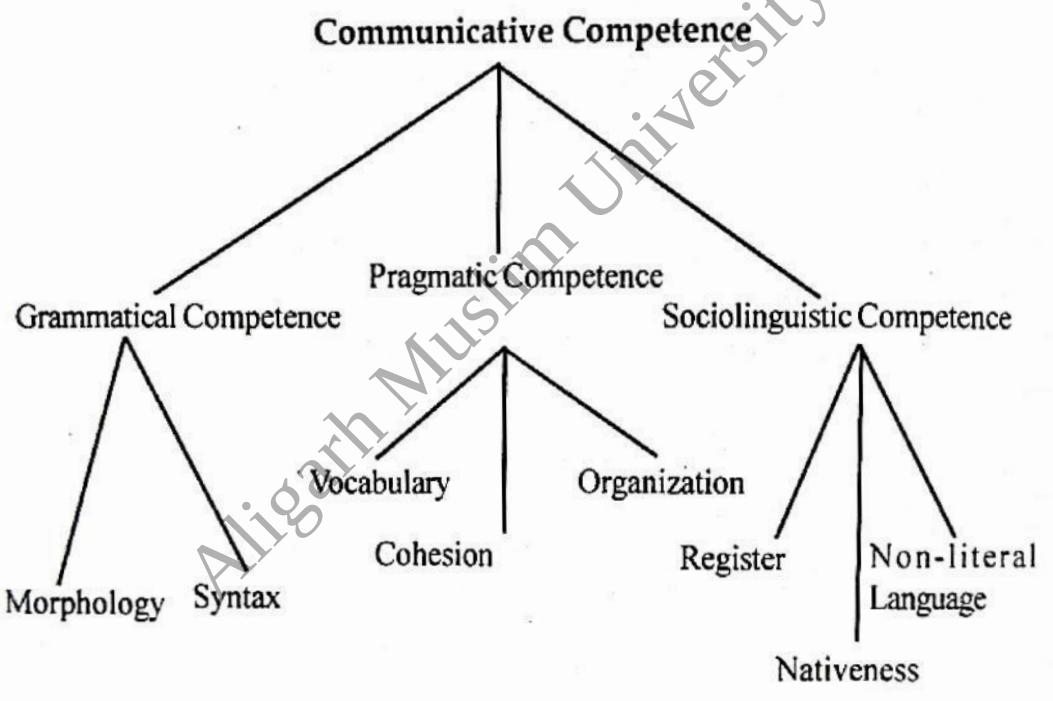

Fig. 1: Bachman and Palmer's (1982) model of Communicative Competence

Fig.2: A Framework for Describing Communicative Language Proficiency (Bachman, 1990)

Bachman and Palmer's (1982) scheme is the absence of the component of strategic competence, which is acknowledged by most of the other conceptualizations of communicative competence.

Bachman's Framework of Communicative Language Proficiency (1990)

Bachman's scheme of communicative language proficiency (1990) is much more comprehensive than Bachman and Palmer's (1982) theoretical framework and adds a number of new components and their subdivisions as the diagram (Fig 2) shows[5]. It mainly differs from Bachman and Palmer's (1982) earlier scheme in that it includes strategic competence as one of the main components. Another important difference lies in the fact that lexis is now listed within grammatical competence rather than pragmatic competence. It also adds psychomotor skills as one of the major components.

However, in spite of the new additions, the model is faulty and unconvincing in many ways. First of all, it makes sociolonguistic competence subservient to pragmatic competence, while in the earlier model of 1982 Bachman and Palmer envisaged this as a separate component on a par with grammatical and pragmatic competence. Pragmatics

as a discipline deals with the 'study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication' (Crystal 1985, p 240)[6]. Pragmatics then does not seem to be distinguishable from sociolinguistics in the light of Crystal's definition, as far as a speaker's communicative competence is concerned, as it encompasses all the participant-related, temporal and spatial constraints inherent in a communicative act. I contend that pragmatics should properly be viewed as a discipline on a par with semantics in which the meanings of sentences are studied in terms of contexts of use, but in considering communicative ability, pragmatic competence should be considered as similar to sociolinguistic competence.

The components listed within Bachman's (1990) pragmatic competence are illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. While illocutionary competence refers to the ability of performing different functions through language, sociolinguistic competence is concerned with factors such as variation of language according to i) register and dialect, ii) cultural references and figures of speech and iii) naturalness. It must be noted that the ability to perform functions as well as the ability to use language according to varying social contexts should be together included into sociolinguistic competence, as language is always used to perform some or other social function. Sociolinguistic and

pragmatic competence should be considered as the same, and in lieu of pragmatic competence Bachman's model should have chosen the term 'sociolinguistic competence' since the former term is considerably ambiguous. Morris (1938) referred to the term pragmatics as a branch of inquiry within semiotics parallel with syntactics and semantics, which he defines as the "study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (1938, p 6)[7]. As Levinson (1983) noted, since Morris's introduction of the trichotomy syntax, semantics and pragmatics, the term pragmatics has been in use with two very distinct senses. While the first sense of the term is very broad and encompasses matters as diverse as psychopathology of communication and the evolution of the symbol system, the second sense is narrow and is restricted to investigation of the meanings of utterances in terms of the users of the language. In short, in the view of the present researcher since the term pragmatics is so laden with ambiguity, it would be advisable to prefer the term sociolinguistics (which is clear in meaning) to the term pragmatics. Also, a significant deficiency in Bachman's (1990) model is that while he has elaborated other components in considerable detail, he has left strategic competence at the mere mention of the name.

A revised model of communicative competence

The researcher has attempted in this section to present and propose a revised model of communicative competence

Fig. 3: Components of Communicative Competence

based upon the original model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) with their three major components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. It has borrowed its fourth component i.e., psychomotor skills from Bachman's (1990) model. A special feature of this revised scheme is that it subdivides each category into a hierarchical framework (see Fig. 3).

The revised model of communicative competence has the following four major components:

I. **Linguistic competence:** Linguistic competence is the same as Chomsky's 'competence', or Canale & Swain's (1980) grammatical competence which encompasses the knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax as well as discourse. In including discourse within grammatical competence, it differs from Canale and Swain's (1983) model and agrees with Bachman's (1990) model.

II. **Sociolinguistic competence:** The second major component is sociolinguistic competence, which refers to using language appropriately according to varying social contexts, and it is of the following types (This classification roughly corresponds with Corder's (1973) types of appropriacy)[9]:

Role-oriented/stylistic: This involves the ability to vary language in accordance with speaker–hearer relationship. For example, language varies on the basis of whether a person is speaking to his son or to his friend.

1. Context-oriented: This refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to the given social contexts considering the various temporal, spatial, functional and user-based constraints. Use of language varies on the basis of temporal setting i.e., whether at the beginning or the end of a function or meeting; on the basis of physical setting i.e., whether at an office or in market, on the basis of linguistic functions i.e., whether one is trying to persuade a client or scolding one's child.

2. Textual-competence: Textual sociolinguistic competence here is distinct from Bachman's (1990) use of the term. Nor does it imply Canale and Swain's discourse competence. It refers to the ability to vary language according to the linguistic text in question whether spoken or written. Thus, language has to vary according to the relevant register and dialect. Use of different registral varieties in the sports column, in the editorial column, and in the cooking column of a newspaper or magazine can be taken as an example.

3. Referential-competence: This refers to the ability of using language in conformity with referential truths or world knowledge. Communication has to be appropriate in accordance with truth conditions or whether something is possible or not. For example, an utterance would be considered bizarre if someone inquires "From which tree did you pluck this dress?"

III. **Psycholinguistic competence:** The third major component in the scheme is psycholinguistic competence which is broadly divided into two main types: cognitive and affective.

1. **Cognitive competence:** This corresponds with strategic competence in earlier schemes and refers to the use of cognitive strategies of communication which might be of two types: pure cognitive and paracognitive. Pure cognitive strategies are inborn mental processes of the mind employed in all communication, as well as all learning. The pure cognitive strategies of communication and learning have been proposed and labelled by the present researcher as consisting of only two mega strategies: simplification and elaboration(Husain 2004, 2006)[10]. Simplification involves simplifying the input or out-

put through either of the substrategies of analysis or selection. Elaboration on the other hand involves relating one item to another and synthesizing them if necessary. Hence, while analysis and selection are proposed as the two substrategies of simplification; correlation and synthesis are proposed as the two substrategies of simplification. Paracognitive competence refers to the use of metalinguistic strategies of communication involving planning, monitoring and evaluation of communication, as well as the sociolinguistic strategies of communication such as asking for clarification or repetition, or feigning understanding.

2. Affective competence: The other main type of strategic or psycholinguistic competence is affective competence which implies the ability to express emotions in keeping with the requirements of the social context. This also involves the manipulation of linguistic and non-linguistic means in terms of hiding, suppressing or even feigning emotions which are non-existent. Affective competence can be of the following types.

a. Role-oriented: This refers to the ability to express emotions in keeping with the relationship with the hearer. For example, one usually does not display one's emotions to a stranger.

b. Context-oriented: This involves the ability to express emotions in keeping with the social context. For example, one's affective behaviour at a funeral is different from that at a party.

c. Affect-oriented: This relates to the ability to express and engage emotions in keeping with the affective state of the hearer. For example, speaking to a person in an angry mood, one has to choose one's words cautiously so that the person is not provoked further; rather an attempt is made to pacify him/her.

Two types of abilities

In addition to the above classification, the researcher is of the view that communicative competence involves two broad types of abilities: inherent and developed. Linguistic competence is largely an inherent ability which is the product of the inborn language faculty in the human mind at

the time of birth and enables the child to acquire its mother tongue without any instruction. When this genetic faculty atrophies at a certain age, later languages are learnt through the employment of the general cognitive faculty responsible for other types of learning. Sociolinguistic ability, i.e. the ability to use language appropriately according to role-relationships, according to the temporal and spatial constraints of the social context, according to the functional purpose of language use, according to the relevant register and dialect and also in relation to referential truths seems to be an ability largely developed through interaction with one's environment. In the psycholinguistic domain, cognitive strategies are inherent universal mental processes. Paracognitive strategies which consist of metalinguistic and sociolinguistic strategies, seem to be largely influenced by environmental factors. As far as affective strategies are concerned, a human child is born with the ability to express emotions naturally; it cannot hide its feelings of happiness, fear or disappointment, but as the child grows older, it learns to regulate the expression of emotions in keeping with social needs and norms. On the other hand, it can also be the case that a child grows into an emotionally deficient adult as a result of suppression and ill-treatment in childhood and fails to express emotions even when required and as required. It can be said that affective competence like linguistic competence is inherited to begin with, but learnt and developed, or warped or stunted through interaction with society.

To sum up, the above paper has three main sections. First, the researcher has briefly reviewed some well-known models of communicative competence. She has subsequently presented her own theoretical framework of communicative competence, built upon the original coneptualizations proposed by Canale and Swain (1980, 1983). She also acknowledges borrowing the component of psychomotor skills from Bachman's (1990) scheme. The chief modification introduced by her in the existing models consists in her elaboration of the component of strategic competence, which she has subsumed within psycholinguistic competence, as one of the major components of communicative competence. She divides it further into two main types: cognitive and affective, which imply the use of cognitive and affective strategies of communication.

Though it is necessary to distinguish between the competence types theoretically, it must be noted that in real communicative contexts an interaction and overlapping of all the four types of abilities is evident as other researchers have also remarked (Savignon, 1983; Yalden, 1987)[11]. In any communicative act, one has to use one's knowledge of the different elements of language, employing one's linguistic competence; and one is also expected at the same time to speak or write appropriately according to the social context, drawing upon one's sociolinguistic ability. The various cognitive and affective strategies are simultaneously in use, while the physical parts of the body such as the tongue and the oral cavity in

speech, the hands in gestures, or in writing, the eyes in expression play their own role.

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Naqi Husain Jafri

History at the Crossroads in Qurratulain Hyder's *My Temples, too*

Qurratulain Hyder is undoubtedly one of the greatest fiction writers of our times. Her principal works include *Mere Bhi Sanamkhane, Safeena-e- Gham-e-Dil, Ag ka Darya,* transcreated by the author as *River of Fire (1998), Akhire Shab ke Hamsafar, Gardishe Range Chaman* and *Chandni Begum. Pathjhar ki Awaz* is a collection of short stories for which Hyder was given Sahitya Akademy award. The three-volume *Kare Jahan Daraz Hai* offers a kaleidoscopic narrative of her life and times in autobiographical mode. She has also written travelogues, which have elicited response from critics and lay readers alike. She received the Jnanpith Award in 1989 for her novel *Aakhir-e-Shab ke Hamsafar (Travellers Unto the Night).*

Her novel *My Temples too* transcreated from her Urdu novel, *Mere Bhi Sanamkhane,* has recently been published. She was born and raised in a world in which, to quote W.B.Yeats, all was 'accustomed' and 'ceremonious'. In this world the essential values found perfection in decency and courtesy. The individual social values were refined within its cultural practices and passed on from generation to generation. Hyder is well known for depiction of this world and for her sense of history. Indeed the sweep of ages that is covered in her fictional writings is rich and vigorous. She also experimented with and perfected the tech-

niques of storytelling that have richly contributed to the development of form of Urdu fiction. Her works cannot be categorized according to the existing and stereotypical modes of narration. She creates new forms and techniques as she delves into the highly cultivated and refined layers of human psyche. She articulates, in her fiction, the realms of our consciousness, which have emerged from the fertile soil of Indo- Muslim culture. Her sensibility is shaped by Persian and Urdu poetry, yet is not at variance with the European influences, which also played a central role in her development as a person and writer. She has a universally modern sensibility.

My Temples, too is set in Lucknow and depicts the period after the Second World War. It offers a landscape which in many ways gives different and refreshingly new insights into the composite culture of the time. In Urdu the fictional writings about Lucknow usually present its feudal urban setting and present a study in a decaying culture. Such fiction focuses on the passing glory of a society and culture, which was highly cultivated and immersed in the finesse of values. *Mere Bhi Sanamkhane* is perhaps the first novel of its kind that brings out the anxieties of educated elite from feudal background who hold its cultural values close to their heart. This work may also be read as the story of the pre-partition Lucknow where a generation was embittered by the political divide between the Muslim League and the Congress. The conflict between the progressive ideologues and the custodians of feudal class underlies much of the action in the novel. The other important aspect of the

novel that stirs the curiosity of the readers is that there are no winners in it. There are only losers, among whom is the city of Lucknow which lost much of its glory as a consequence of the country's partition.

The story begins at a time when the war had ended and 'everybody was waiting to go back home-England, U.S.A, India.' In the sub- continent the separate state of Pakistan was an imminent possibility while the freedom from the British was on the cards. The setting of the novel is located in the estates of Karwaha and Amberpur but the members of the two feudal families live in Lucknow. Ghufran Manzil, the town house of the Karwaha Raj family, is the hub of the political and cultural activities. The people who made the Ghufran Manzil the center of their activity comprised

> ... liberals, and fire-eating revolutionaries, mild scholarly left-wingers and vegetarians and pacifists. Their chief occupation was day-dreaming. They talked of new life and new values and new society – They wore rough handloom cotton and sang Tagore's songs and wrote about realism in literature – – – they were anti-British and passionately believed in Hindu-Muslim unity and discussed how the capitalists and the bourgeoisie of both the Hindu and Muslim communities had conspired among themselves to keep the masses down.

The protagonist of the novel is Rajkumari Rakshanda of Karwaha Raj. Her 'gang' of kindred souls include Ginnie, Christabel, Diamond, Kiran, Vimal and her brother Peechu. They also edit a little magazine, *New Era*. The novel is also concerned with marriages and love affairs. In the very beginning we are told that Peechu has been invited to Amberpur House 'in order to be viewed officially by his prospective in -laws.' Later we find out that he is love with Christabel who is already married. The marriage proposal for Rakshanda is also an important agenda for the Karwaha Raj family. Kunwar Irfan Ali, the Rajah of Karwaha, is a highly cultured noble who is a member of the Lucknow University Court and whose father had given donations for the construction of the magnificent red-stone building of Canning College. He reads Avicenna and plays chess with the old English members of the Indian Civil Service but he hates the new middleclass.

Sitting in his 'cosy drawing room he recited Urdu poetry with his Hindu Taluqdar friends, and fancied himself a solid rock of the old order'. Government service was a disgrace. However his son Peechu quietly decides to join the Indian Air Force but later lands up as a member of the Indian Police Service.

There is another family of Chaudhary Asghar Ali from the town of Sandila who are related to the Karwala Raj but are not as liberal as Kunwar Irfan Ali. Christabel is an English lady married to Raja Hafeez Ahmad who is charming, clever and a brilliant conversationalist.' There is

another family from Murshidabad whose scion Jehagir Qadar, an officer in the Royal Indian Navy is visiting Lucknow. His parents have come to Lucknow with a proposal for Rakhshanda.

The principal characters in the novel, with Rakhshanda as protagonist, are all young men and women, full of new ideas and revolutionary zeal. Through their magazine *New Era* they want to reform society. The protagonist and her 'gang' are despised by both the leftists and the highly conservative. For the left, Rajkumari Rakhshanda 'is a study in dying culture'. Likewise for people like Syed Iftekhar and Chaudhary Shamim, Rakhshanda is a blemish on society. In the beginning they are all 'actors' but at the close of the story they no more act but are 'acted upon.' The greatest catastrophe that renders them helpless and bewildered is the country's partition.

We get brief and fascinating vistas of the *mela* at *Dewa Sharif* and the devotees making it to the Hanuman temple at Aliganj. There are descriptions of ritual observances of *Muharram*. The visuals in the novel, generally at the start of every section, remind us of cinematic technique. We also get an insight into the rhetoric of Muslim League ideologue explaining and justifying the two-nation theory particularly through the characters of Syed Iftikhar and Chaudhary Shameem. We find glimpses of the highly repressive value systems, which marginalize the existence of women in the middle and lower class Indian society.

Quite frequently particularly in the closing stages of the novel the narrative tends to be dramatic as the events

unfold in quick succession. Kunwar Irfan Ali of Karwaha Raj dies in peace at his estate. Rakshanda, Christabel and Kiran move to Bombay, which becomes the new cultural capital of India. Ginnie Kaul gets married and Diamond Hussein migrates to Pakistan. Dr Salim, the Longinus, who comes in Rakhshanda's life like a gentle breeze soon disappears. He finally goes to Allahabad on his way to London. Personal tragedies come to their extreme when we are told that Peechu, Kunwar Salman Ali, I.P.S., is killed by Hindu refugees at Shahadra Railway Station while Kiran Bahadur Katju, the P.R.O.of Indian Army, who loved Ginnie Kaul, is killed by Pathan attackers during the war in Kashmir. After spending sometime in Bombay when Rakshanda finally reaches Lucknow and steps into her own house at Outram Road, she is curtly told by a sentry at the gate that she may approach the women's resettlement office at Aminabad as this building (her own house) is now the office of rehabilitation for men. There cannot be a greater trauma and a more tragic ending to the story.

The novel presents cameos of Indian life interwoven into the narrative. As a consequence the city and pulsating life of Lucknow in the ambience of its culture, experiences and its people come to life. Some of the vivid passages may be mentioned here.

> The rainy season was the most colorful of all, when mango parties were held and seasonal songs were crooned and girls wore rainbow colored *saris*.

Outside, the shadows began to lengthen and the wind became cold. A gust of breeze entered the pavilion and awakened Rakhshanda.

This was the time when a mysterious stillness engulfs the city, a lone violin screeches in a lighted flat, somewhere a dog barks, a big cat flashes past and then all is quiet again.

The was a group of the top notch self styled intellectuals, and because they had chosen to write ambiguous poetry or paint yards of unintelligible canvases they remained hungry most of the time.

The Kunwar Sahib had read much and thought much, for he had all the leisure in the world to do so — —He was a great believer in the idea of restraint and a sense of proportion. According to him this was the basis of real culture, the hallmark of true breeding. A sense of proportion. The Golden Mean.

Autumn arrived and yellow leaves went sailing in the wind, which sighed through

the eucalyptus trees. One felt sleepy in the afternoons and the colorlessness of the day and nights became unbearable.

Life is definitely very beautiful. But do you know that the young and beautiful also die, regardless of koels and rain-washed roses? Consider for instance the terrible fact of the death of Amrita Sher-gil. She painted. And Maneka. She danced.

The trigger-happy Dogra and Baluch armed guards of the train had wiped each other out instantly. And during this pitched battle on the platform a young officer of the Indian Police had been shot down, too, while he was trying, single-handedly, to defend a compartment full of women and children.

The storm continued lashing its wrath with great force. Darkness fell all around. She descended the verandah steps and came out in the darkened garden. Her hair flew about in the wind and a handful of stars glimmered in the night sky.

All of a sudden the gale rose and developed into a tremendous cyclone. The snowstorm thundered with utmost ferocity. The mu-

sic came very, very close. He had gone beyond the dark. The spirit of life traversed the deserts of time.

Twilight had given way to night. Snow covered mountains and frosty valleys and rows of eucalyptus and pines were covered by misty darkness. The wild geese went flying on ... laughing their raucous laugh ... Death... Death... Death, my dear sir, is a terrifying business and no nonsense about it ....

When the wind stopped whistling and the rain stopped, they got up without saying a word to each other, and came out of the room. The door of the gallery closed automatically, as it were by the wind. It was getting dark.

Bees droned in the garden outside. Mysterious looking bronze and marble statues standing around in the old fashioned rooms seemed to be staring hard into the perfect stillness of the summer's day with their black and white sightless eyes.

The stillness of high noon became intense. The peaceful lands of Karwaha Raj were

bathed in the rays of dim winter sun as the Ghaghra flowed on. It had flowed like this when King Ramachandra and Queen Sita had ruled here; it flowed on while Nawab Bahu Begum's barges sailed on its waves, and it was flowing today with the same indifference.

Some interesting observations of the author's deserve special mention:
Litigation was an important and an indispensable part of feudal living.

Thereafter the Christain women will go to another dhobi ghat, which is the church, to wash their souls and another week will pass, another month, another year ....

He didn't have much money in the bank, no landowner did.

Wherever there are girls there is sincerity and warmth and life and light.

Some novel ex-pressions of language that draw our attention are as under:

... making an igloo with his quilt
... will you peep out and have a dekho

Mere Bhi Sanamkhane, situated around the partition of India, may be read as a historical novel. Here history and fiction overlap. They coalesce in a manner that presents the unified experience of the time. The novel recreates the past and depicts how the experience of human motivation is tied to the facts in a manner that has far reaching consequences for the individual and the nation. The novel is not essentially history, as it does not scrupulously narrate the precise way things actually happened. In it we find a fictionalized account with authentic details of the city at a particular moment in time. The life and its characters are caught in the mesh of historical and cultural forces in a manner still relevant with ramifications whose echoes still reverberate in the India of our times.

While reading the novel one finds strange synthesis of the Hindu, the Muslim and the Christian presences, a fascinating landscape going back to antiquity of Ramchandra and Sita, the Sufi Khanqah at Manather, Dewa Sharif, the Loreto Convent and the Isabella Thoburn College. One gets a vivid picture of a highly refined culture so purely secular with wide sympathies and a unified sensibility that one may be tempted to attribute a design on the part of the author to present a scenario that did not exist in real life. Likewise the life styles of the *taluqdars* of Awadh and a contented and prosperous peasantry living in harmony with each other may also appear to be bewildering.

The Hindus and the Muslims shared cultural values with astonishing synthesis. The reader wonders if such a phenomenon ever existed or is it the fertile imagination of the author. But a close reading of the novel makes it obvious that Awadh of yester ages was exactly like this with Lucknow as its fascinating epitome. Both Awadh and Lucknow stand as mute witneses to the forces of history and its aftermath.

This article does not carry Notes and References. Unfortunately Professor Naqi Husain Jafri passed away before he could complete them. The article is being published as a tribute to a literatteur, colleague and friend.

-- Editor

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Mohammad Asim Siddiqui

Mark Twain's Spiritual Dilemma: A Perspective on His Later Writing

There is little doubt that in the popular mind, as, to some extent, in the critical tradition too, the humorist in Mark Twain – the witty and untiring creator of amusing character and scene, the inexhaustible purveyor of quotable quotes – has irretrievably overshadowed the serious thinker whose unfortunate destiny it was to end up in the isolation and loneliness of cynical pessimism. Remembering him as a writer of children's books or, at best, as the author who challengingly took up the theme of negro slavery in *Huckleberry Finn*, his best-known book, the common reader tends to ignore the important fact that Twain was a serious thinker who grew up with his century and, in the domain of religious faith where issues of the ultimate significance of human life are involved, he came to experience the crisis which in the beginning of our century led to the rejection of humanism as a viable philosophy of life. The present paper attempts to explore the nature of that religious and spiritual crisis. I have mainly focused on Twain's later writings though it will not be incorrect to say that all his writings- quite a few of them have not been included in this study most importantly *The Innocents Abroad*- show his lifelong interest in religious matters. The later writings are particularly important because they also point to the drastic change in his religious outlook in his later years. The 'irreverent believer' of the early writ-

ings is lost somewhere in the bitter outpourings and diatribes of the 'cynical agnostic' of later writings.

There have been some good studies of Mark Twain's treatment of religion. However, these studies have not given due consideration to two very important facts. One is that the publication of *Letters from the Earth* in 1962 and "Reflections on Religion" in 1963 present Twain's religious views in a new light. The omission of these works from any study of Twain has also rendered inadequate the early criticism of Twain's religion. Secondly, no study of Twain's religious views can be called complete if it does not consider his philosophical writings. Twain's philosophical writings have generally been studied as separate from his works dealing with religion. As a matter of fact some of the otherwise brilliant studies of Mark Twain's religion present a half-true picture of Twain's religious views because of the critics' neglect of these writings. Thus Philip Foner's painstaking analysis of Twain's religion in his *Mark Twain: Social Critic* fails to satisfy a modern reader of Mark Twain because Foner does not make any mention of these works. Similarly Edward Wagenknecht's brilliant chapter on Twain's religion, "Charts of Salvation" in his monumental work *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work* is less convincing because of this unavoidable omission of these pieces. Even a critic like Bernard DeVoto who had access to the unpublished writings and manuscripts of Twain thought that *The Mysterious Stranger* was Twain's final statement on religion and related matters. This opinion was accepted by many critics partly because it was

a fairly established critical view and partly because of critics' mistake of separating Twain's writings on religion from his philosophical writings.

However, the fact remains that Twain's later writings are of crucial importance to understand the religious crisis which he came to experience in his later years. In these works his views on Christianity are greatly coloured by his pessimism and his deterministic philosophy. In fact, so impatient is Twain in these writing to propagate his views that he even sacrificed the need of adopting a persona to express himself. In his brilliant study of Twain's last ten years, Hamlin Hill, repeating an opinion shared by many critics, points out that in these writings Samuel Langhorne Clemens broke the comic mask of Mark Twain to provide readers with his own candid comments. Hill writes:

> Always uncertain and uncomfortable with fictions, Clemens more and more emphasized the autobiographical voice during his last years. His autobiographical dictations were the most obvious example, but his letters, diaries, essays and literary polemics were only slightly disguised versions of that same voice. The 'fiction' of the decade was almost always abortive and unfinished. Realistic fiction, Hannibal and the Mississippi River, were lost to him as resources for writing; instead anti-imperialism, anti-vivisection, vituperation against Mary Baker Eddy, and similar out-

> bursts, largely lacking the humour characteristic of Mark Twain to provide distance and equanimity, were the major products. And the autobiography itself was the purest form of this confessional mode.[1]

The writings in the 'confessional mode' include Twain's fiction like *Joan of Arc, Puddn' head Wilson, The Mysterious Stranger*, his short stories like "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg", his philosophical pieces like "What is Man", his dictations like "Reflections on Religion" , his *Letters from the Earth* and finally his anti-imperialistic writings. Apart from the autobiographical elements there are certain other recurrent motifs in these works. All these works reflect Twain's preoccupation with the problem of evil. They point to man's insignificance in the universal scheme of things. Some of these writings contain a negation of the Biblical world view and present a very bitter and damaging criticism of the Biblical God, Christ and the Bible. Mark Twain's preoccupation with the figure of Satan also distinguishes these writings.

All these pieces are marked by Twain's growing pessimism though it may be contended that Twain's earlier writings also show traces of his later pessimistic outlook. As a matter of fact throughout his literary career Twain the reformer is waging a war to ameliorate the human condition. In the earlier writings it is in the form of a struggle against a society that can be changed. It is found in *Huckleberry Finn, A Connecticut Yankee in the Court Of King Arthur*

and *the Prince and the Pauper*. But in his later pessimistic pieces, the ones under discussion, he is fighting an already lost battle against a mechanistic and determined universe. In these works his pessimistic attitude "shifts from the injustices of a distorted social order to that of a hopeless and useless life in general."[2]

Twain's novel *Joan of Arc* is poised somewhere in the midst of these two categories. Joan's final defeat is partly to be explained by a distorted social order and partly by a determined universe. Always fascinated by Joan, Twain thought her superior to Eve as she proved herself to be above temptation. In the novel she is shown to be a perfect embodiment of human virtues and transforms even some ordinary persons like Paladin, La Hire and Dwarf into extraordinary creatures.

However, it cannot be said that in Joan Mark Twain 'perceives a ray of hope' or that she offers the ideal example of 'the intuitively moral individual rising above the dehumanizing effects of environmental determinism.'[3] Despite Joan's identification with the Fairy tree in the novel which represents incorruptible youth, moral purity and religious faith and despite Twain's skepticism about the interventions of God in the affairs of man, he demonstrates impartiality in his descriptions of Joan's Voices. Yet she does not conquer the environmental determinism as her tragic death itself results from its dehumanizing effects. Pitted against a cruel and corrupt world of immoral priests and an uncaring King, she meets her downfall after being burnt at the

stake. In fact, it is Twain's eulogization of Joan that has led critics to say that she is above all experience. William Searle also misses this point when he says that Twain's praise of Joan is inconsistent with his moral determinism.[4] The truth is that Twain has only a sentimental love for Joan the individual, firstly because he had respect for some heroic figures like Martin Luther, Napoleon and Cromwell, because they possessed those qualities which ordinary mortals lack. Secondly this novel also has some autobiographical touches as Twain saw similarities between Joan and his daughter Susy. As a matter of fact Twain's love for his wife and his sympathetic attitude towards women in general inspired the character sketch of Joan. Thus this sentimental love for Joan owes something to Twain's personal life and personal beliefs and it is not inconsistent with his overall deterministic view in the novel which explains the tragic death of Joan and the presentation of a debased humanity.

The novel was written at a time when Twain was confronted with some personal tragedies in his life such as business failures and death of his daughter. Moreover, certain factors like scientific determinism, spread of industrialism, imperialistic wars, and the growing materialism were responsible for causing the decay of spiritual values in his time. Twain, always a man of the world as also the author who gave his age its name namely the gilded age, was deeply influenced by these factors. 'That he could represent Joan simultaneously as Christian, Democrat and nature goddess, and yet not exclusively as any of these argues a spiritual

ambivalence, a tension among skepticism, determinism and faith which was by 1896 far from being resolved.'[5]

The overall vision of Twain as it emerges from this novel is that of a pessimist. Despite his praise of Joan in the highest possible terms Twain does not suggest that her perfectibility is really an attainable ideal. On the other hand there is ample proof in the novel to suggest that the forces of evil are too strong to be conquered by the forces of good represented by Joan, described by some critics as female Christ. 'Even as the best the human race has to offer, Joan cannot ultimately improve the course of human society or save herself.'[6]

In other fictional works of this period, "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg", and *The Mysterious Stranger* also Twain pessimistically surrenders to the evil inherent in man. His preoccupation with the figure of Satan in these works reveals another dimension of his religious crisis. In the "Hadleyburg" story Twain presents human soul as entirely corruptible despite man's erroneous belief that one can live a righteous life. Hadleyburg is the most honest, upright and supposedly incorruptible town inhabited by exemplary nineteen citizens of the region. But the mysterious stranger's success in showing the corruptibility of these 'honest' citizens presents human soul in a very negative light. He is able to tempt the town with just a sack of money. This portion of the story reads like 'the reenactment of the fall of Adam'.[7] These exemplary nineteen citizens are exposed one by one as thoroughly corruptible. After his success the stranger,

acting like Satan, comes out with the moral of the story which almost reads like Milton's *Aeropaqaetica*: 'You were easy game. You had an old and lofty reputation for honesty and naturally you were proud of it-it was your treasure of treasures, the very apple of your eye. As soon as I found out that you carefully and vigilantly kept yourselves and your children OUT OF TEMPTATION, I knew how to proceed. Why you simple creatures, the weakest of all weak things is a virtue which had not been tested in the fire'....My project was to corrupt Hadleyburg the Incorruptible.'[8]

Twain's preoccupation with Satan continues in *The Mysterious Stranger*. Edward Wegenknecht remarks that 'Satan seems to have appealed to him more as the principle of rebellion than as the principle of evil.'[9] In this novel Twain voices his rejection of Christian world view through Satan.

The Mysterious Stranger is a novel of initiation. The principal character of the novel is being educated in the mysteries of life by Satan who claims to be omniscient. He seems to represent the idea of free will[10] while Theodore voices traditional Christian beliefs. Through their encounters Twain tries to grasp the mystery of life from different perspectives: 'His judgment on Christianity is based on the assumption that the world is deterministic; his judgment of (sic) is based on the assumption that the structure of the world must be a moral one.'[11] Thus Satan traces the history of mankind to Adam which is essentially a Christian idea but he denies after-life, a deterministic idea. His final judgment on life is utterly nihilistic:

> Nothing exists; all is a dream. God — man — the world, the sun, the moon, the wilderness of stars — a dream, all a dream; they have no existence. Nothing exists save empty space — And you are not you — you have no body, no blood, no bones you are but a thought. I myself have no existence; I am but a dream — your dream, creature of your imagination.[12]

Satan, voicing Twain's opinion, presents a wholly pessimistic picture of man and not 'an optimistic belief in the collective power of the human mind' as Budford Scrivner Jr. tries to explain.[13] He has but disgust and contempt for man: 'Man is made of dirt — I saw him made. I am not made of dirt. Man is a museum of disease, a home of impurities; he comes today and is gone tomorrow; he begins as dirt and departs as stench. I am of the aristocracy of the imperishables (p. 742).' The moral sense which Christianity claims makes man superior to other creatures because it gives him the knowledge of right and wrong is considered by Satan to be the greatest weakness of man. He views man's pride in possessing the moral sense in the same contemptuous manner:

> It is your paltry race — always lying, always claiming virtues which it hasn't got, always denying them to the higher animals, which possess them. No brute ever does a cruel thing — that is the monopoly of those with the Moral Sense when a brute inflicts pain he does

> it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it. Only man does that. Inspired by that mongrel Moral Sense of his: A sense whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, with liberty to choose which of them he will do. No what advantage can he get out of that? He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong (pp. 659-670).

Another pessimistic idea that is presented in the novel is that of death as a release from the imprisonment of life. In fact, in his later years Twain was very much preoccupied with this idea. First Twain flirts with this idea in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Later in his short epigrams attributed to Dave Wilson in *Puddn head Wilson* and *Following the Equator*, he is constantly seen welcoming death. In *The Mysterious Stranger* this idea is voiced through Satan. He tells Theodore that he will ensure that Nikolaus dies young. To the boys pleadings against it he argues that if he did not do it, Nikolaus would catch scarlet fever with pathetic after-effects: 'for forty six years he would lie in his bed a paralytic log, deaf, dumb, blind and praying night and day for the blessed relief of death (p. 698)'.

Nikolaus finally dies as Satan had predicted. His tragic death is mourned by all and his mother finds fault with God's ways to man: 'But in His hard heart there is no compassion. I will never pray again (p. 711).' Here Twain

introduces a Christian idea through Theodore: 'Why, He had saved it from harm — but she did not know (p. 711)'. In other words Theodore says that God can sometimes bring good out of apparent evil.

The Mysterious Stranger does not resolve Twain's spiritual crisis. This failure to come to a final solution to life's mysteries also characterizes "What is Man", which Twain called his gospel. This work is presented in the form of a dialogue between a young man and a cynical old man. The old man, obviously voicing the opinions of the ageing author, explains to the young man the meaning of life. Considering man merely a machine he denies man any freedom of thought. All ideas of man, religious or political, are determined not by his inner convictions but because he wants to gain the recognition and approval of people he values. The mind of man is merely a blank slate and there is no fundamental difference between his mind and that of animals. The old Man further says that it is human environment which influences man's mind and his feelings, furnishes him his ideals and sets him on the path of life. He even denies man the freedom of instinctive action. Instinct is considered merely petrified thought, thought solidified and made 'inanimate by habit'.

"What is Man" thus emphasizes the law of causality and indirectly refers to evolutionary theory. But it is also Twain's plea for pardon because if man is helpless, he cannot be blamed for his actions. It exonerates man from all blame because he is doomed to be defeated, sentenced to

commit errors, and fated to be a worthless creature.

"What is Man" may be Twain's gospel though it still is not Twain's last word on matters religious and spiritual. Twain's final statement on religion is recorded in "Reflections on Religion", dictated to his biographer Albert Biglew Paine in June 1906, and *Letters from the Earth* written in 1909. In *Letters from the Earth* Mark Twain uses Satan as his very thinly disguised persona. Exiled from heaven, he lands on earth and reports back his observations to St. Michael and St. Gabriel. The tone of both these works is so acrid and astringent that Twain did not want them to be published in his life time. Before writing "Reflections on Religion" Twain wrote to Howells on Sunday, June 17, 1906: 'Tomorrow I mean to dictate a chapter which will get my heirs and assigns burnt alive if they venture to print it this side of 2006 AD which I judge they won't; there'll be lots of such chapters if I live 3 or 4 years longer. The edition of AD 2006 will make a stir when it comes out'.[14] However, it came out in 1963 and not 2006, thanks to Charles Neider's efforts. But it did make a stir as it changed the hitherto accepted picture of Mark Twain the religious thinker. For nowhere else does Twain express his contempt so strongly for Christianity and the Bible, as he does in "Reflections".

Twain vehemently launches an attack upon the Biblical God. He calls Him 'a man overcharged with evil impulses far beyond the human limit (p. 332).' God's acts also enrage Twain:

> In the Old Testament His acts expose His vindictive, unjust, ungenerous, pitiless and vengeful nature constantly. He is always punishing – punishing trifling misdeeds with thousand fold severity; punishing innocent children for the misdeeds of their parents; punishing unoffending populations for the misdeeds of their rulers; even descending to wreak bloody vengeance upon harmless calves and lambs and sheep and bullocks as punishment for inconsequential trespasses committed by their proprietors (p. 332).

Twain charges God with treachery for not having warned Adam of death if the latter tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree. In defence of Adam he argues that Adam was innocent and had no knowledge of death. Twain also identifies the earthly half of God with Christ and holds him responsible for creating hell. He speaks of him in the bitterest possible terms:

> We conceive that the earthly half is just, merciful, charitable, benevolent, forgiving and full of sympathy for the sufferings of mankind and anxious to remove them. Apparently we deduce this character not by examining facts but by diligently declining to search them, measure them, and weigh them. The earthly half requires us to be merciful and sets us an example by inventing a lake of fire and brim-

> stone in which all of us who fail to recognize and worship Him as God are to be burned through all eternity... We have nothing approaching it among human savages, nor among the wild beast of the jungle (pp. 333-334).

Twain also cries shame upon the Real God, the God of grandeur and majesty, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent. He explains the indifference of God to man's affairs with reference to the Boer War. The God who is called Father is wholly unsympathetic and has designed everything to inflict misery from the very first day of creation. He is completely destitute of morals and 'proves every day that He takes no interest in man, nor in the other animals, further than to torture them, slay them and get out of this pastime such entertainment as it may afford – and do what He cannot to get weary of the eternal and changelss monotony of it (p. 349)'.

The Bible about which Twain had spoken so highly in *The Innocents Abroad* also incurs the wrath of his embittered soul15. The first charge that Twain makes against the Bible is its lack of originality. Thus it borrowed the idea of the Golden Rule and the Deluge from other sources without even acknowledging this debt. Similarly the idea of the Immaculate Conception had been worn threadbare before the Bible adopted it as a new idea. It enrages Twain so much that he also charges Christianity and the Bible with immorality. 'It could occur to nobody but a God that a divine son

procured through promiscuous relations with a peasant family in a village could improve the purity of the product/yet that is the very idea (pp. 337-338)'.

The idea that the Bible corrupts the mind recurs in *Letters* too. In this work Satan, the mouthpiece of Twain, while criticizing the Biblical account of creation, summarizes Bible: 'It is full of interest. It has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; and some good morals; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies.'[16]

Twain had completely lost belief in the Christian concepts of heaven and hell. In "Reflections" he points out that their existence is based merely on hearsay evidence. If Christ had really been God he would have proved the existence of heaven and hell. In the *Letters*, on the other hand, Satan makes fun of man's conception of heaven. In his opinion man attaches utmost importance to two things in this world: sexual intercourse and intellect. Yet he has not found a place for sexual intercourse in his heaven. As for intellect 'he contrives a heaven that has't a rag of intellectuality in it anywhere! (p.19)'

In both these works Twain tries to seek a solution to the problem of evil by fixing the entire blame on God. Denying man any free will Twain says that all control is vested in his temperament and his circumstances — things over which he has no control. In the "Reflections" he points out that God alone is responsible for every act and word of human

beings' life between the cradle and the grave. In *Letters* Twain also makes a distinction between the true and supposed law of God. The temperament of man is the true law of God while the commandments are the supposed law of God. So it is quite impossible for man, an automatic mechanism, to follow the commandments.

The preceding discussion just shows Twain's total turnaround from his early stance on religion. Twain's attitude towards the Bible and its characters, though skeptical is still marked by some degree of reverence in his early fiction. *The Innocents Abroad*, the best known of his early works, contains many passages 'which have obviously been written from the point of view of a believer.'[17] However the early scepticism of his travel books and fiction pales into insignificance before "Reflections" and the *Letters from the Earth*. This raises two fundamental questions about his religious thinking. What were the forces that shaped his early scepticism? What were the factors that brought about such a drastic change in his religious outlook in his closing years? The answer to these questions necessitates an analysis of some of the facts of Twain's life and the impact of science on his overall philosophical thinking.[18]

A highly controversial book on Mark Twain, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* by Van Wyck Brooks highlights the impact of Calvinism on his thinking, especially imposed by Twain's mother Jana Lampton Clemans. Calvinism exercised a powerful influence on Twain's early thinking in that he became familiar with the Bible and other sacred works

at a pretty early stage of his life. However, in these very years Twain's religious thinking was affected by the liberal ideas of his father John Clemens, and uncle John Quarles. In his later life uncle Quarles became a Universalist. In fact Twain's town Hannibal witnessed frequent discussions on the relative merit of Calvinism and Universalism. The influence of Universalists on a sensitive and intelligent person like Twain cannot be discounted.

There was a definite change in Twain's religious outlook after he left Hannibal in 1853. As a Cub pilot he was introduced to deistic ideas through, among other sources, Tom Paine's *The Age of Reason*. He also came under the influence of Freemasonry. In 1861 he became a Freemason joining the Polar star Lodge Number 79 of St. Louis. However, the impact of Freemasonry, though clearly noticeable in *The Innocents Abroad*, cannot be overestimated as has been done by Alexander E. Jones. It is true that certain Masonic tenets especially the ones stressing the human origin of religious creeds, contempt for the traditional Jehovah of the Old Testament did appeal to Mark Twain. However, it cannot be said with any amount of certainty that Twain came to form liberal views especially under the influence of Freemasonry. Alexander E. Jones' view that Twain's respect for God the Creator under the influence of Freemasonry remained even in his final years is not correct[19] as has been discussed elsewhere in this paper.

Twain's experiences of the world also played a very important role in shaping his thinking. He witnessed the

gold rush period closely and realized how civilization is made up of the usual depravities, baseness and hypocrisies. The great hopes that he held for mankind were certainly eluding him like the Utopia that eluded the Connecticut Yankee. Edward wagenknecht has put it succinctly: 'The great idealists ask too much of mankind, too much of themselves; their vision of what life might be is so high that the thought of what it is becomes unendurable.'[20] These experiences coupled with his personal tragedies — death of his daughter and wife and the business fiasco — filled him with bitterness.

Mark Twain's intellectual predicament was also greatly a result of the impact of the then current scientific thought. The growth of Darwinian school of thought in the 1870s, and the mechanistic philosophy in 1890s with new claims in Physics shook the convictions of most of the intelligent men of the time. Mark Twain was no exception. His knowledge of science though not complete by any means, was nevertheless quite exhaustive. He was familiar with Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin's idea that there is no fundamental difference between man and animals recurs in the last writings of Twain. However, Twain did not accept Darwin uncritically. He rather differed from Darwin on the question of the moral superiority of man as has been discussed elsewhere in this paper. Stan Poole makes a very interesting observation on the influence of Darwinism on Twain's thought. He says that 'it seems more likely that Mark Twain treated the complex body of theoretical material associated

with Darwinism as a source of stimulating ideas he found useful for expressing his own varied response to life but which never provided the kind of unified vision necessary for a coherent philosophy'. [21]

The mechanistic thought of Huxley and Haeckel dwells upon the functioning of a natural law, the indifference of the impersonal universe to man's personal life. Their thought reduces man to a state of insignificance. The ideas of Twain's gospel "What is Man?" referred to in this paper conform greatly to their mechanistic view of life. Twain also considers man a mechanism, an unimportant creature in the overall scheme of the universe..

The idea of the insignificance of man in the vast universe also owed a great deal to Twain's lifelong interest in geology and astronomy, the sciences which while emphasizing the infinite time scale and the vastness of universe, make human history and human world look so trivial.

Minnie M. Brashear in her famous book *Mark Twain: Son of Missouri*, has developed the thesis that Mark Twain's philosophy basically springs from eighteenth century thought and is completely unaffected by the intellectual development of his own time.[22] In a rebuttal of her point of view, Hyatt Hows Waggoner, while rightly pointing out that Twain's philosophy owed a lot to nineteenth century scientific thought, clarifies: 'If Mark Twain's philosophy has points in common with those of Hobbes and Hume, that is not strange: Hobbes and Hume influenced the whole course

of modern thought. The fact to be noted is that his philosophy also has much in common with the ideas of Darwin, Huxley and Hackel.'[23] However, the truth lies in the fact that Twain's religious and philosophical thinking was a result of all these factors: early atmosphere at home and in his town, the exposure to deistic ideas, the scientific thought of his time, and most importantly his own unique reaction to various experiences of life.

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12 Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger* in *The Portable Mark Twain*, Bernard DeVoto (ed.) (New York, 1961) pp742. (Further references to *The Mysterious Stranger*, also from the same edition, are incorporated in the text.

13 Budford Scrivner, op.cit., p. 21.

14 Quoted by Charles Neider in his introduction to "Reflections on Religion", *Hudson Review*, Vol. XVI (1963), No.3 (Summer), p. 331. Page numbers of the subsequent references to the text of "Reflection", also from the same work, are indicated in the text.

15 Though Twain seems to have been influenced by the then current scientific thought, he perhaps did not make a direct study of the higher criticism of the Bible. The higher criticism of the Bible, largely based on the findings of anthropology, stressed the mythical and allegorical dimensions of the Bible. But Twain appears to have tenaciously clung to the literal interpretation of the Bible.

16 Mark Twain, *Letters from the Earth*, ed Bernard DeVoto, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p.20. Page numbers of the subsequent references to this work are incorporated in the text.

17 Edward Wagenknecht, op cit; p. 175.

18 See Philip Foner, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, (New York: International Publishers, 1958). In fact, am indebted to Philip Foner for providing some important facts which shaped Twain's religious thinking.

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The Writer Characters in Hemingway's Fiction

Hemingway would long be remembered for the macho-man characters he has created in his fiction. His protagonists are mainly men of action: soldiers, bullfighters, boxers and fishermen. Most readers of Hemingway are likely to recall characters such as Robert Jordan of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Manuel Garcia of *The Undefeated*, Pedro Romero of *The Sun Also Rises*, Harry Morgan of *To Have and Have Not*, and Santiago of *The Old Man and the Sea*. However such a reading, directed towards the most commonly accepted norm of Hemingway's character portrayal, brings to attention a generally neglected group of characters; the group which could reflect on both Hemingway's criteria in choosing the characters and his observations on the literary art; the portrayal of writer characters in his works.

In his non-fictional work *Green Hills of Africa* which can be said to be a book about writing and writers, Hemingway says that 'a writer's problem does not change.... It is always how to write truly and having found what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes part of the experience of the person who reads it'[1]. Again in an oft quoted passage in *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway observes: 'knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel,' and to put down 'what really

happened in action.... the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion....'[2]. But in the posthumously published Nick Adams story 'On Writing', Hemingway shows that his use of personal experience, his approach to 'truth' was far from simple or direct. Nick, as an aspiring writer declares: 'Above all else you had to do it from inside yourself.' 'Nick in the stories was never himself,' he explains, 'rather you had to create your own people' to reconstitute reality in the crucible of imagination[3]. Thus the 'real thing' according to Hemingway, which produced beauty and great emotion was not the simple reproduction of people and events, rather it was the rearrangement of sequences through imagination. He made possible the devious task of merging the past and the present together with the ruminations of the mind to create fiction which itself posed a challenge. Hemingway himself once defined the challenge before a writer as: "the necessity to put a thousand intangibles into a sentence"[4]. His famous dictum of the iceberg with seven eights of the real subject lying beneath the surface, points to further intangibilities, compelling the reader to probe deeper into the undiscovered realms of his fiction.

Due to certain controversial statements in his nonfiction works and in his public utterances, everything that Hemingway wrote or said about writing must be weighed carefully to determine whether it was part of an act, or a self-serving attempt to maintain his public image. It seems that Hemingway was most honest and least guarded while

writing fiction. In his fiction he discarded the macho writer persona that he maintained for the public and instead assumed various literary personae that would enable him to explore a number of problems regarding literary life through fiction. Hemingway's fiction contains some of the most interesting indications regarding his concept of writing and his perception of the writer. The writer-characters become more prominent in his work as his work advances. Therefore, it would not be out of place to treat the works more or less in the order in which they were written.

Philip Young's anthology of the Nick Adams stories includes an unpublished fragment 'On Writing', omitted from the story 'Big Two-Hearted River' written in 1924. Critics have viewed 'On Writing' as a fragment of or an alternative ending to 'Big Two-Hearted River' due to the similarity of setting and character. Hemingway himself wrote to Robert Mc Almon that he had cut all the 'mental conversation' in the story. 'I got a hell of a shock when I realized how bad it was and that shocked me back into the river again and I've finished it off the way it ought to have been all along. Just the straight fishing'[5]. 'On Writing', an eleven page rumination, written in the stream-of-consciousness vein, comprising the thoughts of Nick Adams as an aspiring writer, presumably explains the preliminary hint that Nick Adams was a writer. This hint was left stranded when Hemingway cut his original ending and wrote a new one.

To his fictional persona Nick Adams, Hemingway

outrightly assigned his own personal reminiscences in a bid to blatantly transfer life to fiction. In the fragment 'On Writing', Nick speaks of himself as the author of 'My Old Man' and 'Indian Camp', stories written by Hemingway in the volume *In Our Time*. But Hemingway cleverly shows Nick as evolving a theory of invention rather than raw transcription from life: 'Everything good he'd ever written he'd made up. None of it had ever happened.' That was what Nick's family couldn't understand. 'They thought it was all experience.' In one of his interior monologues, Nick the writer, turns his focus on Nick the protagonist: 'Nick in the stories was never himself. He made him up. Of course he'd never seen an Indian woman having a baby. That was what made it good. Nobody knew that'.[6] In his assessment of his contemporaries, Nick speaks both of their weaknesses and the cause of their success: Joyce's weakness was that he 'was too damn romantic and intellectual about his hero'. Stephen Dedalus in Ulysses was Joyce himself 'so he was terrible.' But Bloom and Mrs. Bloom had been made up, so were 'wonderful.' It was easy to write if you used tricks and Joyce had invented hundreds of new ones. But even these new tricks 'would all turn into clichés.' E. E. Cummings with his 'automatic writing' produced 'smart stuff' that was easy to do. But not *The Enormous Room*, that was one of the great books and Cummings worked hard to get it'. Don Stewart had the most next to Cummings. Young Asch had something 'but you couldn't tell. Jews go bad quickly.' Nick also recalls names of Ring Lardner, Sherwood and Dreiser but 'they weren't after what he was after.' Hemingway's Nick knows

that he will become a great writer. 'He knew it in lots of ways.' Nick exults in creativity as his greatest pleasure and 'fell almost holy about it.'[7]

Inspite of the critical fervour and the author's own claim, 'On Writing' should be treated as a complete entity in itself, not as mere appendage or missing portion of 'Big Two-Hearted River'. The essential difference between the wounded ex-soldier in 'Big Two-Hearted River' is that he could maintain his mental balance only so far before the strain becomes unbearable and he becomes sick and shaky while the aspiring writer in 'On Writing' possesses the power to transmute his traumatic past experiences into art, thus creating a sort of immortality to his identity. 'He wanted to write like Cezanne painted.' Nick's awareness of the power of art to change the human predicament makes him entirely independent of the Nick in 'Big Two-Hearted River'. His major artistic inspiration comes not from any external experience but from the reality inside himself. He believes that writing about 'anything actual' was a mistake. 'The only writing that was any good was what you made up, what you imagined. That made everything come true.'[8] The aesthetic perspective of 'On Writing' thus shows that Hemingway's quest for the 'real thing' was, rather paradoxically, a matter of simulation rather than recalling and simply reproducing what he had seen or felt. 'On Writing', therefore, besides presenting the formative process of Nick as a perceptive artist, comments intriguingly not only on 'Big Two-Hearted River' but on the entire corpus of

Hemingway's fiction.

In the last section of Nick Adams stories 'Fathers and Sons' there is a telling reference to Nick as a writer. In this story Nick regards his writing as a means of purgation to his troubling memories related to his father: 'If he wrote he would get rid of it. He had gotten rid of many things by writing them. But it was still too early for that.'[9] The reference to many things probably implies to his wartime experiences and his unhappy memories of childhood. A deleted passage from the manuscript of 'An Alpine Idyll' regarded as a Nick Adams story would have identified the protagonist as a writer. After hearing the old peasant's story about the mutilation of his wife's body, John says to the protagonist: 'There's a good story for you,' The protagonist replies, 'Its no good....Nobody would believe it.'[10] Again, in one of the posthumously published Nick Adams stories 'Summer People', Nick is shown as an amateur writer though he is confident of becoming a great writer in future. Unlike Harry of 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro', Nick 'hadn't lived long enough' to write down his experiences. 'How could he....when he only knew ten years of life. He couldn't. Wait till he was fifty.'[11] It is quite obvious that in conceiving his earliest protagonist, Nick Adams, Hemingway had thought of him as a writer, but due to certain circumstances which he wanted to avoid at that time of his career, he skirted the problems peculiar to a writer. The author's reticence was probably due to the fact that his characters were generally identified with him and perhaps in the beginning of his career he was not ready to expose his inner self to his readers.

Besides the Nick Adams stories Hemingway has portrayed writer characters in some other stories also. Hubert Elliot of the story 'Mr. & Mrs. Elliot' writes long poems very rapidly and then uses his money and social prominence to get them published. In the story 'I Guess Everything Reminds You of Something', the protagonist as a school going child plagiarises a story just to boast off and please his father who is a well known writer. When the father discovers the deception he feels extremely unhappy and realizes that all his efforts at teaching his child have been wasted. These characters and incidents may or may not have an autobiographical base but they do not have that kind of significance in the context of the development of the writer's art which the above mentioned Nick Adams stories have.

Hemingway deals with the theme of writing more extensively in the story 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro'. Harry, the writer protagonist lies dying of a gangrene infection contracted while on a Safari in Tanzania. It is symptomatic of his predicament and of his character, that he has carelessly allowed a simple scratch on his leg to become infected by just neglecting it. As he lies in his cot, waiting for the plane to take him to a nearby hospital, he drifts in and out of his consciousness. He realizes with regret the experiences that he might have converted into fiction to give them lasting significance but he had traded away his talents and now it is too late. The dramatic action consists of his ruminations on his past life as a writer and journalist and his intermittent quarrels with his wife, Helen, who is trying to keep up

his spirits. On that skeletal framework Hemingway drew a complex work of fiction which incorporated the experiences of his own professional career.

The story 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' uncharacteristically emphasizes thought, perhaps because the protagonist of the story, on his deathbed can no longer avoid thinking. Nearly all the earlier Hemingway protagonists seem to have tried to refrain from thinking, or have rigidly controlled the direction of their thinking as Nick does in 'Big Two-Hearted River'. In 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro', Hemingway lets thinking and memory serve as the story. The italicized sections project Harry's memory as a rich reservoir and testify to the importance of his experience: 'He had seen the world change; not just the events.' Although he had not written it, he was well-equipped to portray life in our time. Harry is shown to be above all else a person of imagination. As a writer, he has set his goal very high. He contemplates demanding tasks: 'it seemed as though it telescoped so that you might put it all into one paragraph if you could get it right.'[12] But he had destroyed his talent by not using it, by drink, by sheer laziness. He thinks nostalgically of his undone years and makes a supreme mental effort to rise above his physical condition His reminiscences come to him, not in the disorderly hazy manner of feverish memories, but in a vivid orderly control of a conscious prose writer. After the last flashback, he develops the illusion that he has been writing: 'I've been writing,' he said, 'But I got tired,'[13] He thinks that he has been writing at last the things he saved up to

write about. He achieves in his mind, in a humble way, what he fails to do physically and his strong will, coupled with his mental effort, enables him to move towards the peak of the symbolic mountain.

The epigraph about the leopard on the slopes of the mountain assumes a meaning in the light of Harry's final dream. The leopard dies while moving towards the summit and Harry dies while dreaming that he is moving towards it. The snow covered mountain is suggestive of immortality by its virtue of preserving things from decay. Harry, as a writer, has dreamed of achieving immortality through art all his life. But he fails wretchedly for he dreams of moving towards the summit at the time of his death, whereas in actuality he dies a rotten death. He dies full of illusions. Even in his dream, he does not reach the summit, although he comes very close to the top and the reader is made aware that Harry has failed the duty he himself believes his talent had placed upon him.

'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' is thus Hemingway's summing-up of his experience as a writer at mid-life and mid-career. He obviously, could sense the bitterness and regret Harry felt realizing the fact that he no longer had the time to write the things he wanted to write and had been putting it off. True, Hemingway had looked back over his career, remembering the incidents and events __'some actual, some borrowed, others invented'__ in order to broaden the range of Harry's experience. Biographers have also linked the story with Hemingway's own African Safari when he

came down with amoebic dysentry and was flown to Nairobi by a bush pilot. The plane passed within the sight of Kilimanjaro and inspired Hemingway to write the story. But a great disservice and injustice will be done to Hemingway and the story itself if it is read as a straight personal confession.

Hemingway's protagonists in the novels published during his lifetime are not writers, at least not writers of prominence. When dealing with writers, he usually employs them as secondary characters, the protagonists are usually soldiers, bull fighters, fishermen etc. Hemingway has expressed his distrust of the fake literary response on many occasions and in the fictional character of Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*, he presents a study of dishonest and fake emotional behaviour. The miserable romantic Robert Cohn is an artist devoid of any real artistic sensibility. He invested his inherited money in a literary magazine to become the editor and then uses his influence to get his own books published. He is shown moving around in the company of such pretentious writers as himself. In *To Have and Have Not*, Hemingway exposes the self- styled proletarian writer Richard Gordan who writes about the hardships of the poor without having any personal experience or insight into those hardships. He is ineffectual as a writer because he seems to be playing the role of a writer rather than writing from the depth of his heart.

David Bourne of *The Garden of Eden* presents a thoughtful consideration of the writer's nature. Recent criti-

cal attention directed almost solely towards the sexual element (transsexual theme) has made the readers overlook the plight of the artist which gains more importance when seen in a different perspective. David, the writer protagonist tries to resist the pressures of his wife Catherine, who follows androgynous practices and forces her husband to change places with her, especially at night. As the story advances, Catherine's craziness becomes more diabolic, until she is in full grip of her mania. Her mental instability grows to the extent that when she fails to distract him from his writing and to direct him to the subject matter of her choice, she betrays her hostility towards her husband's artistic endeavour by dousing his manuscripts with gasoline and setting them afire. Here it is pertinent to recall Hemingway's loss of his manuscripts in Paris through his first wife Hadley Richardson for which he had 'never forgiven her'[14]. The connection between the androgynous practices of Catherine and the creative strength of David is conveyed by the two kinds of narratives David writes: the main narrative dealing with David's own relationship with Catherine and her adventurous plunge into androgyny and lesbianism, which Catherine herself wants him to concentrate on and for which she spends money to try and find illustrators like Picasso, Marie Laurencin and Nick Sheldon, and the African stories of David's boyhood that she resents so much that she ultimately burns them. David becomes desperate on getting to know that Catherine has destroyed his scripts. He couldn't bring himself to accept what had happened: 'He had not believed that the stories could be gone.... She couldn't re-

ally have destroyed them... He still could not believe that she had done it but felt sick inside himself when he closed and locked the door.'[15] When Marita sympathizes with him and tells him to write the stories again, he tends to lose confidence in his own creative power. In the context of his writing he remarks that if he gets everything right he can't remember how he had done it. He is himself greatly surprised at what he had achieved and finds it unbelievable that it was he who had done the work. He therefore pathetically feels that he would never be able to write and reconstruct the stories of his boyhood. It is only towards the very end of the novel that Marita's love unlike Catherine's helps him to gather confidence and he is able to recall vividly his boyhood memories and write steadily:

> Not a sentence was missing and there were many that he put down as they were returned to him without changing them. By two o' clock he had recovered, corrected and improved what it had taken him five days to write originally. He wrote on a while longer and there was no sign that any of it would ever cease returning to him intact.[16]

The Garden of Eden can be said to be a novel about a writer's courage as he struggles to transcend and overcome his own terrible dependencies and passivities. E.L. Doctorow's puzzlement over the hero's passivity and 'the ultimate deadness of the piece'[17] in David's character can be explained by David's resisting his complicity in things

feminine by writing manly tales about African war and hunting expeditions. Hemingway's depiction of the artist figure in *The Garden of Eden* , is informed by the desire to give a narrative form to his boyhood memories, lack of adult experience and the fear of corruption and contamination. Writing becomes for him the means of redemption and recovery as well as an affirmation of sexual identity. Critics and biographers have tried to find parallels between David and the author himself. According to Mark Spilka the African tales that David Bourne composes on the Riviera are invented boyhood stories like those that Hemingway wrote about Nick Adams in northern Michigan and David's disillusionment with his father in the crucial elephant tale is like Nick's disillusionment with Dr. Adams in tales like 'Indian Camp', 'The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife' , 'Ten Indians', and 'Fathers and Sons'.[18]

As early as *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway remarks that the only reality is what one remembers, and 'memory, of course, is never true.'[19] Here again the 'real thing' which produces beauty and great emotion is not the simple reproduction of people and events, 'the objective data of experience,' but that which the author makes in rearranging his material. This is exactly what David does in *The Garden of Eden*. The novel's numerous references to 'invention' and to things 'made up' indicate Hemingway's interest in the now widely recognized post-modern theme of subjective realit__reality as artifice. Through David's preoccupation with 'imperfect memory' and through the inter-weaving of the fiction David writes with the one he is in,

Hemingway portrays fiction and reality as indistinguishable, the idea being that it is not literal truth which is always shifting and elusive but the symbolic or personal truths that is created through 'imperfect remembering' and subjective colouring. Hence, studies directed towards the autobiographical mode of Hemingway's writing could be misleading.

Inspite of Hemingway's sustained interest in dealing with the problems of the writer and his art, Hemingway fails to create any convincing writer character who has done full justice to his art. Nearly all his writer characters have failed in their attempt to express their experiences in words. As with his other characters who almost always met with defeat and whose victories were at best moral; the writer characters were always thwarted in their ambition to create a perfect work of art. Nick could not find the times conducive to his art and thought of postponing writing for the present. Harry, who had wasted his talents thought of writing when it was already too late. Only David Bourne seems to achieve success in writing the two kinds of narratives but even this success is partial as his scripts are destroyed by his wife. Even work becomes a sign of weakness when David despite his boasting at the beginning of the novel that he never drinks before or while writing drinks more and more as the story unfolds. Although he is firm about writing in near future and is shown dedicated to his work in the last chapter, we do not come to know of his real success. As with Hemingway himself, he might have faced the same doubts, difficulties and adverse circumstances in which he

put his writer characters but he was always successful in writing and unlike his writer protagonists who could never immortalize themselves through writing, Hemingway has become an icon in the literary world.

There is much in Hemingway's portrayal of writers to dispel the popular notion that he was a firm advocate of the mimetic theory of art. The importance that he attached to composition is well known but what is not often appreciated that he recognized the transformative role of imagination as the basis of artistic creation. It is this idea of creation which comes through a study of the meta writing component in his short stories and novels.

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