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VOLUME 26 2004 NUMBERS 1 & 2

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CONTENTS

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 26, Nos. 1& 2, 2004, pp. 1-33

Shikoh Mohsin Mirza

Consciousness and Fiction

Every thought derives from a thwarted sensation. - E.M. Cioran

Creating fictions is a distinctive human attribute, as universal and pervasive as the use of language. There is hardly a culture or society that has not developed narrative forms on its own. This fiction creating capability is in fact so essentially a part of human beings that we engage in this activity all the time without knowing it. The events and stories that appear in our mind in the form of fiction may or may not have been experienced by us in real life. They might refer to an outside reality, or may carry sedimentations and fusions of experiences and emotions that have either significance for an individual or for the larger community. Psychologists also tell us that we create fictions consciously as well as unconsciously. The evidence lies in our dreams, in which we string together, albeit unconsciously, sequences of events, most of which are forged by the mind itself. This activity serves diverse psychic functions, like catharsis and sublimation. As Freud showed the events and their sequences arise from within the deepest recesses of our mind and have psychic, emotional, and intellectual significance that may be beyond the comprehension of an individual. These transformations do not occur only when we sleep. Our waking mind employs similar

procedures, as it finds itself 'thrust' in the contingent world, in order to understand better the alien reality all around and to use that understanding to eliminate risks to the self. In the process individuals realize the importance and utility of the capacity to 'fictionalize'. They discover that they can think, enumerate, classify, codify and abstract ideas and concepts for various purposes. We thus learn to create fiction in daily life. As civilizations and cultures develop and flourish the full potential of the human capacity to 'fictionalize' comes to fruition.

Archaeologists point out that writing had been invented only as recently as 5,200 years ago. However, human beings have used the spoken word to create stories and myths for as long as 100,000 years. Even in non-literate earliest human beings we find stories about hunting and similar events in the form of cave paintings. The urge to express, to communicate and to interpret was urgently felt by humans. This was embodied in the act of storytelling. The development of human cultures mirrors the development of storytelling in its diverse and comprehensive aspects. The stories of the individuals are transformed into collective stories of the community, which are gradually enshrined in the myths of a particular civilization. These myths create their own language in accordance to the four fundamental "mytho-linguistic" principles which Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul T. Barber call Silence, Analogy, Compression, and

Restructuring in their book, When *They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth*. In fiction similar techniques are used. Many similar procedures are employed in language too with the help of figures of speech like synonymy, metonymy, metaphor, and symbolism. So fiction is a tool the mind works with and as it employs it there are discoveries galore for the uses it can be put to. It can be easily surmised that this fiction making capacity serves a greater purpose. It is more than just a time passing or entertaining streak in us humans.

In order to probe further the relationship between consciousness and fiction one should first define both the terms.

The word 'fiction' essentially bears two senses. In specialist terms, as used in narratology, fiction refers to a structure of narratives. In its simplest form fiction is a sequence of events, called 'story'. According to the distinction made famous by E.M.Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel* when the emphasis is on the cause-effect relationship between the events, the sequence is called 'plot'. A story is of course a plot as an arrangement of events is derived from the relationships between the selected events. In its second sense it also signifies a mental procedure, an ingrained human activity for understanding, interpreting, communicating, identity creation etc. The two however are related and complement each other.

In this regard the pair of terms provided by the Russian Formalists – *fabula* and *sjuzhet* – is significant in explaining the relationship between reality and fiction. Fiction is constituted of a narrative made up of events and the relationships among them. The continuum of events welded together build up a meaning. Creation and discovery of relationships and meaning in a particular sequence of events takes place in our mind. This is the function of consciousness.

It is universally accepted that consciousness is a faculty of the mind that is constituted of our thoughts, feelings, intuitions, memories, imagination, senses, and perceptions. All of these coalesce in a unified whole to form a capability that provides us an awareness of the world around us and more importantly of ourselves. This happens in a manner unique to human beings. Consciousness remains an elusive and difficult entity to define and explain. Yet one cannot deny its existence and its role in making us understand and make sense of the world around us, in coping with its hazards and in transforming and moulding it for our benefit. It is consciousness that enables us to construct a language that enables us to address ourselves to each other and to engage with the environment.

It is true that animals also have a rudimentary form of consciousness that makes them aware of the environment. This is essential to enable them to cope with the enveloping world. Here one should

differentiate the sensations of the body from those of the consciousness. The bodily sensations like pain, thirst, hunger are the ones we experience like animals. These depend on the nervous system; thus with painkillers and anesthesia these sensations can be avoided. However the distinctive human consciousness can be described by the term apperception as it appears in the philosophy of Leibniz and Kant. In their philosophy the term stands for self-conscious awareness in contrast to the sensory perceptions of the external objects. Here the human will is also assigned a central role for the formation of consciousness. This human consciousness is different from that of the animals in the sense that there is the pronounced element of 'awareness', 'knowingness', 'intentionality' , and 'will' involved in the whole process.

Consciousness is also differentiated as being either transitive or intransitive. The former kind is experienced in relation to some external object while the latter is 'consciousness about consciousness'. Are we really aware of a palpable consciousnes pulsating in us? The matter is still problematic. However this must not detain us here.

It is true that the world does exist independent of us. A rock or a tree or a wall or a snowdrift are all there irrespective of our awareness of them. The things in the world exist in their own right. But we view them and our mind transforms them into percepts or impressions acquired through our consciousness. The

mind tends to interpret them in relation with one's contingent self in the world. In this, one's intermesh of abstract thoughts and will also play a crucial role. Thus if it is snowing outside that is an instance of a natural phenomenon. It is possible that we perceive the snowflakes and feel the cold, as animals do . To protect themseves the animals would also run for cover as we would if we are caught in a snowstorm. These are reflex actions. However if we tell ourselves that it is snowing and so we should not go outside or that we should wear adequate warm clothes the whole situation changes. Our consciousness is at work and events are now causally linked together and endowed with meaning or conditionality for future action. This happens because of the application of the fictionalizing procedure of the mind . It is here that fiction creating becomes an important and inevitable part of our consciousness.

Now consciousness requires a language to articulate its 'apperceptions'. Creating fictions is one method of articulating the 'appercepted' part of reality. Fictions mould and shape the impressions from without after interpreting them on the basis of learned behaviour, memories and past experiences. Interestingly, the etymological derivation enforces this function of fiction. The word 'fiction' derives from Latin fingo, which means ' to fashion and form'. Thus fiction shapes our apperceptions of material and reality that is shapeless. This is essential to construct a

grammar with its distinctive structure. This construct has a unique logic and rationality that enables the mind to make sense of the world and to push the margins of the incomprehensible, the irrational, and the chaotic. We make sense of things by imposing fictions on them.

In fiction events are brought together in a sequence. The narration uses several devices that stem from the grammar of the mind to discover sense in such plots. This meaning arises from the causality that consciousness discovers between different events in a sequence. There is a kind of interaction among events, causality and consciousness. In the complex process that ensues consciousness becomes embodied in the events and the resulting meaning. We can thus say that consciousness articulates itself with fiction. In this connection one should emphasize the creative role of consciousness. The apperception of the contingent and external world, whose awareness we acquire through our senses, intermingles with individual consciousness for awareness and understanding of it.

One has to accept that the body can and does exist independent of the mind. The body experiences pain, feelings and sensations, which are entirely independent of an individual's consciousness. However one can identify a consciousness that experiences differently from the body. The developed form of it in humans has a capacity to memorize, reconfigure, transform, interpret, re-interpret and

recreate the continuum of impressions that the mind garners and garnishes through the body's sensations. This process continues constantly. This is also called thought. Consciousness is certainly substantially thought that requires expression. Though language and similar signifying systems express consciousness it would not be wrong to say that to enable consciousness to transform the impressions' continuum into an articulable form the mind requires a logic and conceptualization. This is where the operation of the mind comes in. It breaks the continuum into identifiable units, which become the building blocks of any language meant to articulate the ineffable.

Language is the medium or 'vehicle' to express and share thought. Language is a shared form, with its own grammar and system that operates on the shapeless reality. As stated earlier fiction serves the intermediary purpose of creating events out of our experiences and feelings. One can conclude that 'fiction' is a procedure with which consciousness operates. Consciousness works in three ways – creating the units, imposing causality on them in order to discover a relationship, and then interpreting them. However, one should emphasize that all these procedures occur simultaneously in the human mind. This can be explained by taking the example of mathematics. What is mathematics? Is mathematics a fiction? Is it logic independent of the mind? Is it an abstract structure, translatable and transformable, into

its symbols and signs? Euclidean assumptions and scientific hypotheses are all somehow fictions of the mind in which units are created and endowed with causality and meaning and then tested against the empirical observations. One can say the same thing about scientific theories. The implication of the theories is that there is an inherent logic in the phenomenal world. Mathematics and scientific theories abstract them out of the observed data. How does the mind do that? The obvious answer is that it uses the fictionalizing procedure to break the reality into units and elements that are the building blocks. These are in turn sequenced together to form either an analogue, or symbol, or embodiment of some of the inherent logic in reality. The validity of the logic is tested by applying it to observations and by utilizing it to duplicate the phenomena. The point is that consciousness has to create a trial-and-error procedure and fiction is the means by which it does just that.

In the case of literary fiction the generalizing factor is replaced by a kind of uniqueness and individuality. Literary fictions might not entirely be verifiable in the way in which scientific theories can be, but these fictions do enable consciousness to give shape to contingent impressions. These impressions are received by the mind through the bodily sensations. The process of perception and sensing and feeling and abstraction is a complex phenomenon still not understood by us. How does consciousness shape,

break up and abstract and impose meaning on the historical and temporal continuum remains a mystery still. Yet it can be easily concluded that fiction is a specialized kind of logic that enables consciousness to emerge from its absorption in the contingent reality. Thus the working of consciousness is reflected in the fictionalizing procedures, which in turn finds expression in language. There is no claim here that it does so comprehensively or most aptly. The point is that consciousness embodies itself by this process and this way it probes and expands itself further.

Even though the phenomenal world is constituted of many physical things it would not be wrong to say that as humans we do construct a world in our consciousness. At the bare physical level – say one skirting a rock, or avoiding falling into a gorge – the matter relates to survival , something that the animals also have to cope with. When I see a gorge or a ditch and sidestep to avoid them it is not necessary that I have myself fallen earlier into a ditch or seen somebody fall into a gorge. Consciousness works here in a complex and diverse way. Here many things, like trial and error, experiences, memory , and analogies, do play a crucial role. When it comes to matters that are neither instinctual nor impulsive or that are not reflex actions consciousness becomes important. The creations of abstractions , the imposition of meaning and sense on events and the relationship with the external world become matters of fictonalizing

procedure. Thus there is an element of truth in the realization by philosophers that what we see and sense will ultimately be transfigured into a sort of abstraction that is called a 'fact' or an 'event'. This is what has been concluded by the philosophers of mind. Hence one such philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, says in *Tractatus Logico- Philosophicus :*

1.0 The world is all that is the case.
1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by their being all the facts.
1.12 For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.
1.13 The facts in logical space are the world.
1.2 The world divides into facts.
1.21 Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same. [1]

The whole process describes the fiction creating procedure of the mind. As explained above though the body exists and feels the sensations, these are transmitted to the mind that interprets the impressions and percepts with the help of logic of the mind which we have termed –the fictionalizing procedure. The logical space explained here is the consciousness.

Proceding further we can identify three kinds of consciousness:

1. The pre-linguistic consciousness –some sense of awareness and self-awareness , a kind we find even in animals.

2.The nonlinguistic consciousness -it had now been demonstrated that even some animals are able to do things that can only be explained on the basis of some kind of conceptualizing activity in their mind.
3. The second order thought or the meta thought - it is accepted by all that this is necessary for advanced forms of thinking. In humans this dominates and is responsible for the creation of the language in which it can be embodied. This consciousness requires storage and transmission in addition to the communication, which requires sharing of sign systems. The memory in human mind serves the purpose at one stage but the invention of the signifying system enables consciousness to manipulate and permute its structure. Thus, it cannot be denied that consciousness is concerned with apperception, representation, and expression in a structured manner. It helps a human being – body/mind- to interrelate with the world.

The interrelation, expression and communication are complicated phenomena but do entail a logical structure. Now the question arises that how is this logical structure constructed. It can be shown that it is rooted in the pre-linguistic consciousness. *In* the contingent world the first priority for us is to survive. Our appetites and instincts enable us to sense the risks and hazards to our life. We have to devise means to avoid them. For us, and for animals, logic originates in this condition of our existence.

Now consider a situation. One is driving on a mountain road that is quite hazardous and there are sharp turns, valleys and gorges that one has to avoid to survive. One utters the following sentences:

- There is a gorge in front.
- Don't drive straight.
- Go round the bend or you would fall into a ravine and die.

Consider another situation in which a person tells the others.

- There is a fire in the house.
- Rush out or you would also burn.

In another situation one says:

- There is snowfall outside.
- Don't go outside

In all the above cases the cause-effect is the cornerstone for the creation of logic essential for survival. This connects events with each other, with reality and this in turn brings about interpretation of the world. Here what we see is the creation of fiction-transformation of percepts and phenomena into facts and events, their interpretation and discovery of relationship among them, some of which are verifiable in the phenomenal world. Reality is a continuum -the contingent 'fabula'. Making consideration for individual variations this continuum is broken up by human consciousness into events, which are in turn

linked together into sequences based on cause-effect relationships.

One can sum up the argument thus: It is fiction that creates the logic, which enables us to 'appercept' and interpret the reality. Our feelings and sensations, like pleasure, fear, anxiety and mental capacities of introspection and hypothetical thinking do lead us to unique interpretations and definitions of the reality. Consciousness creates the syntax of events (fiction), which is the essential logic we require to survive. The particular interpretation of a chain of events is the '*sjuzhet*'. This is the narrative that is found in all cultures and in all languages, as we cannot survive without it. Thus it is obvious that we create fictions as a rationalizing activity of the consciousness.

In regard to the relationship between consciousness and fiction and the expression in language, the example of music can be enlightening. Music neither denotes nor represents any meaning. Yet when music is used to tell a story, it embodies the interaction between consciousness and the world. Though music penetrates all the aspects of human being and existence, and appeals to the emotions, yet in the telling of the story in music the expressional element enters its total experience.

Music represents non-representational communication. To understand the complexities of this we can consider the music of the nineteenth century German musician Richard Wagner (1813-1883). His

work is crucial for the developments in music that arose because of his operas. The opera, as we know, is the western form of story telling in music. It is the narrative in which the building blocks or units are the musical notes, which in turn are non-denotational. This can be illustrated by considering his magnum opus, *Ring*, a long work of about 18 hours' music. The opera achieves unity through weaving together themes and leitmotifs with significance for each other. A cascade of ideas and themes is generated as the opera progresses. There are variations and diversity provided by the musical texture. Gradually a story takes shape as one listens and watches and begins to discover connections in ideas, acts and events. As a result his opera becomes ' not merely a story about gods, humans and dwarfs but embodies reflections on every aspect of the human condition.' It has been interpreted as socialist, fascist, Jungian, prophetic, as a parable about industrial society, and much more. Thus the non-representational form that affects us emotionally, spiritually and intellectually does so as inevitably a fiction begins to emerge from within the form of music. This is another evidence of the fact that consciousness requires the logic, called fiction, in order to embody itself, express itself and to communicate with the others.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Richard Wagner's innovations in music exerted an immense influence on the European novel. The French

writer Edouard Dujardin (1861-1949), who co-founded the journal, Revue Wagnerienne, invented interior monologue and stream-of-consciousness which were essentially the literary embodiments of the techniques of story telling in music as developed by Richard Wagner. The modernists and the post -modernists extensively used Wagner's techniques of leitmotifs. Wagner had shown that fiction is in fact non-representational also. It has the capacity to bring about a fusion of consciousness and fiction.

In the post-Freudian and post-Nietzschean phase of novel writing the mechanistic and structured narrative of the novels was transformed into a more viable and robust form by borrowing techniques from musical operas. In order to engage comprehensively with human existence the techniques of leitmotif and associations were extensively used. The narrative became a malleable language and instrument in the service of fictionalizing procedures of the mind. It enabled the writers to capture the depths of the psychical in contrast to the cerebral. The experimentations in the narrative structure- namely the break up of linearity, continuous repetitions and associations - were a consequence of the techniques of non-representational story telling in music.

The modernists had realized that the relationship between consciousness and fiction was complementary. They discovered that individual consciousness is unlimited and that self, being, psyche

were not easily captured in the conceptualizing systems. Thus in the novels of Flaubert, Proust, Sartre, James, Conrad, Joyce fiction becomes a means of embodying consciousness. Hence their fictions explore individual consciousness and continuously extend their horizons.

The Austrian philosopher of everyday language Ludwig Wittgenstein had famously been set off on his trailblazing trajectory of philosophical investigations with the posing of his question: Why can't I describe the aroma of coffee? The question raised by him expresses the crux of the problem in the epistemological study of language. Here the pertinent point is whether language is capable of expressing the specificity and uniqueness of a person's experiences that in turn stem from the particular consciousness of his mind. In recent times the study of consciousness has addressed itself to this important epistemological problem. In 1983 the psychologist Joseph Levine published a seminal essay, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap" that has addressed the problem of the uniqueness of consciousness. In the wake of his essay, the concept of 'qualia' has acquired a key position in subsequent discussions. 'Qualia', plural of the Latin quale, refers to the specific nature of our subjective experience of the world. According to *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*:

> Examples of 'qualia' are the smell of freshly ground coffee or the taste of pineapple; such experiences have a distinctive phenomenological character which we

have all experienced but which, it seems, is very difficult to describe." [2]

Consciousness constantly takes recourse to fiction to capture the 'qualia', the uniqueness of each experience. In literature the specificity and uniqueness of experiencing subjects is the essence. Literary fiction is about characters that exist both in space and time. Their existence is historical and contingent. It is both transcendental and rooted in the real. Literature depicts the immersion of consciousness in the spatio-temporal field isolated out of the continuum of reality and the contingent. Thus in each literary fiction consciousness is the perceiving and the conceiving subject, its percepts, sensations, and experiences interacting in a unique field.

In literature this relationship between consciousness and fiction has always been important. Since the rise of the 'novel of inner life' in the nineteenth century French literature authors have emphasized the central role of the narrator, or the 'central intelligence' in fiction. As a consequence consciousness has become the pivot of modern novel, especially the one that emerged after Flaubert's experimentations in fiction.

> In his famous essay of 1884, "The Art of Fiction," James says, "Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, catching every air-borne particle in its tissue."[3]

This 'chamber of consciousness' is the mind that interacts and interrelates with the enveloping reality. This interaction however is not so simple. Consciousness is both a natural phenomenon as well as a culturally cultivated part of human personality. It can easily be shown, on evidence from Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, that culture does affect our perceptions, sensations and thought. This in turn is reflected in the language that a particular culture uses. Thus the Eskimos look at snowfall in a different way than other people and Arabs look at camel in a different way than other cultures. There is strong evidence to suggest that consciousness develops from a biological faculty into a unique capacity of an individual. In literature and arts this relationship flourishes and develops into forms of expression that are unique since created by individual consciousness. Here the possibilities are infinite. So each original work is a realization of this possibility and in each possibility fusion of being, self, emotions, aspirations, associations of meanings and images takes place.

Now consider the example from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*:

> She went out. The walls trembled, the ceiling was crushing her, and she passed back through the long alley, stumbling against the heaps of dead leaves scattered by the wind. At last she reached the ha-ha hedge in front of the gate; she broke her nails against the lock in her haste to open it. Then a hundred steps farther on, breathless, almost falling, she stopped. And now turning round, she once more saw the

> impassive chateau, with the park, the gardens, the three courts, and all the windows of the facade. She remained lost in stupor, and having no more consciousness of herself than through the beating of her arteries, that she seemed to hear bursting forth like a deafening music filling all the fields. The earth beneath her feet was more yielding than the sea, and the furrows seemed to her immense brown waves breaking into foam. Everything in her head, of memories, ideas, went off at once like a thousand pieces of fireworks. She saw her father, Lheureux's closet, their room at home, another landscape. Madness was coming upon her; she grew afraid, and managed to recover herself, in a confused way, it is true, for she did not in the, least remember the cause of the terrible condition she was in, that is to say, the question of money. She suffered only in her love, and felt her soul passing from her in this memory; as wounded men, dying, feel their life ebb from their bleeding wounds. Night was falling, crows were flying about.+

The passage is essentially an embodiment of the protagonist, Emma Bovary's consciousness. Her passionate feelings, perceptions, thoughts, fears, anxieties and aspirations shape her consciousness in a unique manner. Emma becomes a plaything in the hands of her deepest desires, the dark libidinal forces that make her world. As she hurries on her assignation with her lover, the landscape she scans and the emotional contours of her desire intermingle to give rise to a form that exists at diverse planes-realistic, psychological, artistic. The realistic details are transfigured through imagery, metaphor, and symbols to interpenetrate different regions of the self and being

of Emma. The technique innovated by Flaubert is the free indirect style in which the objective and the subjective, the collective and the individual intermingle. The fiction in the episode, in our terms the 'fabula' or the sequence of events, is being configured into a consciousness that communicates non-representationally the unique experience of a unique individual. Fiction and consciousness complement each other. Here the past events, their memory and significance, the emotional core of them, the present events, along with the intense passions and desires of Emma have an interactive role to play. Her consciousness is as much shaped by fiction as fiction is shaped by her consciousness overwhelmed by her libido. In this the conflict and strain between the Dionysian and the Apollonian is quite apparent affecting Emma's senses and percepts in such a manner that the objective details change into objective correlates of her consciousness and mind. The passage depicts interplay of the consciousness and fiction. The French philosopher Pascal says, "The heart has reasons of which reason knows not", and the passage illustrates just that.

Herbert Marcuse writes that 'whatever belongs to the sphere of sensuousness, pleasure, impulse has the connotation of being antagonistic to reason – something that has to be subjugated, constrained.' So *Madame Bovary* maps the consciousness of Emma in which the fictions of her life and impulses are in perpetual conflict. The characteristics of the Dionysian

are abandonment of individuality and will and an absorption into ecstasy, sexuality, and instincts. The passage embodies this Dionysian aspect of life.

Consider another passage from Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* :

> In the time of Spanish rule, and for many years afterwards, the town of Sulaco — the luxuriant beauty of the orange gardens bears witness to its antiquity — had never been commercially more important than a coasting port with a fairly large local trade in ox-hides and indigo. The clumsy deep-sea galleons of the conquerors that, needing a brisk gale to move at all, would lie becalmed, where your modern ship built on clipper lines forges ahead by the mere flapping of her sails, had been barred out of Sulaco by the prevailing calms of its vast gulf. Some harbours of the earth are made difficult of access by the treachery of sunken rocks and the tempests of their shores. Sulaco had found an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world in the solemn hush of the deep Golfo Placido as if within an enormous semi-circular and unroofed temple open to the ocean, with its walls of lofty mountains hung with the mourning draperies of cloud. [5]

In this passage from Conrad percepts, symbolic expression and language coalesce. Time and space are merged. The scene appears as a painting that is spatial and temporal. In the opening sentence, history forms the backdrop against which the present is emerging. The present and past being thus juxtaposed the relationship between them, their mutual influences and their intermeshing are emphasized. A new reality, in which time, space, perceived reality, its signification

and representation are moulded by the consciousness of the observer- the narrating consciousness, is coming into being. In the realm of the consciousness the process of symbolizing the landscape takes place. This occurs because of the intense moments of crisis in the history of the place. The town of Sulaco is described in physical details. There are descriptions of the landscape, yet the passage betrays the historical momentousness of the place through a human consciousness that penetrates the landscape in lines like the following:

> The clumsy deep-sea galleons of the conquerors. Sulaco had found an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world in the solemn hush of the deep Golfo Placido as if within an enormous semi-circular and unroofed temple open to the ocean, with its walls of lofty mountains hung with the mourning draperies of cloud.

The narrating consciousness is intermeshed with the landscape. The passage is about a town and its history. History is created by the acts of individuals and is in turn preserved in written accounts or in memory as a sequence of events. History is fiction of acts and fiction of circumstances. In the passage the effect is that of a coalescing of consciousness, fiction [sequence of events] and language. This all creates the 'tropicality' of fiction and language that is transfigured into a higher reality. Thus we find that the fabric of narrative is interwoven with strands of consciousness, fiction and language. The literal and the figural, the real and the imaginary

exist in a seamless continuum, all brought together by the consciousness whose voice we hear as the narrator. In the following passage from James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* an instance of epiphany is described. The phenomenal world is transfigured by the imagination, an attribute of consciousness. The individual consciousness discovers newer horizons. To broaden consciousness' horizons is another important function of fiction. Here Joyce focuses on the imaginative and the creative aspect of consciousness. Consider this in contrast to the passage about Emma - the sensual woman. The consciousness here is Apollonian, Stephen's artistic consciousness cultivated through conscious immersion in the aesthetics of the Western culture. The artist transfigures the physical reality through the fictions his imagination creates.

> Her image had passed into his soul forever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings. A world, a glimmer or a flower? Glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to itself, breaking in full crimson and unfolding and fading to palest rose, leaf by leaf and wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flushes, every flush deeper than the other. [6]

In modern times the relationship between consciousness and fiction has acquired a greater significance in the wake of post-structuralism and post-modernism. The emphasis on the primacy of the signifying systems and the recent trends in some fashionable literary theories to debunk 'consciousness' has brought the problematic of the role and function of consciousness center stage. Any act of narration – oral or verbal- inevitably gives birth to a narrating voice and a narrating consciousness. It is in fact this narrative consciousness that engages and addresses with the scattered and disparate elements that appear in the field of vision of the narrator. In real life a human mind has to engage with myriad impressions- seen and unseen- every moment. Human consciousness shapes them and interprets them in terms meaningful, significant and useful for it. It creates a rationale and logic that is in turn dependent on the strategies of survival and self-preservation. But in humans the part of being that has to do with aspirations and aesthetics and the recovery of pleasure and delight all lead to that artistic endeavor where the artistic and the aesthetic begin to interface with the affective, intellectual and spiritual.

In fiction the narrating consciousness is always foregrounded. The narrative always reads as a palimsest of the struggle of this consciousness to prove its validity, to keep itself alive and to justify its meanings. Among the classic examples of such

narratives is the trilogy of Samuel Beckett's, namely *Molloy, Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable.*

As has been suggested, earlier philosophers, psychologists and behaviorist scientists accept that there are two kinds of consciousness- transitive and intransitive. The former is our awareness of objects around us, while the latter is awareness of consciousness itself. This is termed the second order thought or consciousness of consciousness. It is true that as human beings we are first aware of the things around us, which also includes our body. This immediately leads on to other implications. As human beings employing sign systems, we have a double perspective arising from consciousness and our transformation into signifying systems of the sense our body-mind makes of this reality. Thus signifying systems are representations of objects.

In our mind these different varieties of consciousness are unified and create a unique experience that also influences our ways of looking around, of sensing, and of feeling. These in turn affect again the later modes of comprehension and 'apperception.' Thus consciousness is continuously and simultaneously an act of being and becoming. As Sartre's philosophy of existentialism stresses this is a challenge, a duty and a struggle. In an absurd world and in the face of cornucopia of body-mind perception-sensations and intractable experiences, the only way to make our existence 'authentic' and 'meaningful' is

to shape our impressions and to translate them in the interpretable language of sign systems.

In Sartre's ontology, being and consciousness play a key role. His philosophical magnum opus *Being and Nothingness* describes two kinds of being- *en-soi* or the in-itself and *pour-soi* or the for-itself. These can be translated as referring to respectively the state of non-conscious being and the state of conscious being. Though he adds another category *pour-autrui* or being for others, the first two are crucial in his philosophy. Our body-mind are 'thrust' (to use Heideggerian term) into this world without our will. But the human situation arises from the acute awareness of the fact that we had been thrown into a world of things, events and facts and that we are condemned to make sense of them. Thus we have to take recourse to the expediency of creating fictions in order to recuperate meaning and essence (which may be mythological, social and personal). He terms human existence as made up of 'facticity' and 'transcendence'. The facticity is constituted of the pysical reality around us and the physical being that we are. But he adds another dimension to it. This is the construct of our mind and imagination namely, the fictions that we create. Our earlier choices and earlier selves in our acts of will and intentionality also form a part of facticity. It is the role of consciousness to make us aware of this. In order to transform the barren world of facticity humans resort to transcendence. This is the central human situation that has been created by the interface

between world, consciousness and the fictions of our mind. In the context of the foregoing, now consider the following passage from Jean-Paul Sartre's masterpiece, *Nausea*:

> 6.00 p.m.
> I can't say I feel relieved or satisfied; just the opposite, I am crushed. Only my goal is reached: I know what I wanted to know; I have understood all that has happened to me since January. The Nausea has not left me and I don't believe it will leave me so soon; but I no longer have to bear it, it is no longer an illness or a passing fit: it is I. So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and *the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface*. I was sitting, stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of this black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me. Then I had this vision. It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of "existence." I was like the others, like the ones walking along the seashore, all dressed in their spring finery. I said, like them, "The ocean is green; that white speck up there is a seagull," but I didn't feel that it existed or that the seagull was an "existing seagull"; usually existence hides itself. It is there, around us, in us, it is *us*, you can't say two words without mentioning it, but you can never touch it. When I believed I was thinking about it, I must believe that I was thinking nothing, my head wasempty, or there was just one word in my head, the word "to be." Or else I was thinking . . . how can I explain it? I was thinking of *belonging, I was telling myself that the sea belonged to the class of green objects*, or that the green was a part of the quality of the sea. Even when I

> looked at things, I was miles from dreaming that they existed: *they looked like scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their resistance.*[7]

The italics have been added to emphasize that the narrator, Roquentin, is immersed in the objects and things among which he finds himself thrust and thrown by the incidence of having been born. We find him grappling with the facticity of his being. In the episode, he is depicted in his effort to transcend this by applying consciousness and fictionalizing procedure to the world around. The strain and conflict, the dialectical relationship, the human exigency of the situation creates the agony and anguish of the existential angst of Roquentin's situation. It is facticity that is opaque and incomprehensible. The mind's and heart's urging to fathom the 'mystery of things' brings its agony. This exacerbates the acuteness of Roquentin's isolation and bafflement. It brings only despair and loss in the labyrinth of facticity. Only consciousness provides a way, even though it might be just temporary and local, out of this labyrinth. Roquentin lavishes his individual and personal consciousness together with its complement, the fictions, to discover the way out.

> In vain I tried to *count* the chestnut trees, to *locate* them by their relationship to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees: each of them escaped the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself, and overflowed. Of these relations (which I insisted on maintaining in order to delay the crumbling

> of the human world, measures, quantities, and directions)—*I felt myself to be the arbitrator*; they no longer had their teeth into things.Roquentin is the 'arbitrator', he would look for and discover meaning in the facticity that is swamping him.I was *In the way* for eternity. The word absurdity is coming to life under my pen; a little while ago, in the garden, I couldn't find it,but neither was I looking for it, I didn't need it: I thought without words, *on* things, *with* things. Absurdity was not an idea in my head, or the sound of a voice, only this long serpent dead at my feet, this wooden serpent. Serpent or claw or root or vulture's talon, what difference does it make. And without formulating anything clearly, I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my Nauseas, to my own life. In fact, all that I could grasp beyond that returns to this fundamental absurdity. Absurdity: another word; I struggle against words; down there I touched the thing. But I wanted to fix the absolute character of this absurdity here. A movement, an event in the tiny coloured world of men is only relatively absurd: by relation to the accompanying circumstances. [8]

This then is the essential situation of Roquentin - absurdity, nausea, bafflement, and incomprehension. The escape lies in accepting the human existentialist situation, to bestow will and intentionality on the facticity – to create fictions. Thus Roquentin resolves in this manner:

> I got up and went out. Once at the gate, I turned back. Then the garden smiled at me. I leaned against the gate and watched for a long time. The smile of the trees, of the laurel, *meant* something; that was the real secret of existence. I remembered one Sunday, not more than three weeks ago, I had already detected everywhere a sort of conspiratorial air. Was it in my intention? I felt with boredom that I had no way of

> understanding. No way. Yet it was there, waiting, looking at one. It was there on the trunk of the chestnut tree ... it was *the* chestnut tree. Things—you might have called themthoughts—which stopped halfway, which were forgotten, which forgot what they wanted to think andwhich stayed like that, hanging about with an odd little sense which was beyond them. That littlesense annoyed me: I *could not* understand it, even if I could have stayed leaning against the gate for a century; I had learned all I could know about existence. I left, I went back to the hotel and I wrote. [9]

To write a journal-novel is the next project that the sensitive person Roquentin undertakes. He does this in order to escape madness and nausea in the face of alienation and loss that he confronts in the cosmos. Eventually he writes the novel *Nausea* ,a work of fiction that expresses his personal 'qualia', his impressions of the reality pressing upon him from all round. He imposes a pattern and structure on the random and chaotic by writing this journal-novel. Within its structure the randomly thrown together acquire a pattern and meaning. In the narration the events get linked together in a plot. Consequently a cause-effect relationship emerges, so that the margins of choas recede in the background. The pattern imposed by the artwork forges a relationsip between the narrator Roquentin and the reality. The aesthetic work liberates him from the angst of the existential situation. The mirror-image of consciousness, the narrating-self, creates an ideal world where the intractable experiences of the world can be shaped into meaningful

fictions. The being is eventually elevated from the tyranical absorption and submergence in the facticity and the contingent. Consciousness extracts the 'sjuzhet' from the surounding continuum of the 'fabula'. Here imagination plays a key role and art ultimately saves us through transcendence. Consciousnss is eventually redeemed and salvaged by the fictions it invents.

Department of English and
Modern European Languages,
Jamia Millia Islamia,
New Delhi.

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Iqbal Hasan

The Note of 'Double Awareness' in *Sartor Resartus*

In his *Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry* E.D.H. Johnson has remarked that the Victorian literature is characterized by what he termed as 'double awareness'[1]. He thinks that 'a conflict was visible between the public conscience of the man of letters and the artist's private conscience. 'The highest allegiance of the writer must be to his own aesthetic sensibilities'. In the works of the Victorian writers there is 'a recognizable kind of tension originating in the writer's traditional desire to communicate, without betraying the purity of his motive in the face of a public little disposed to undergo the rigors of aesthetic experience'.[2] The object of this paper [3] is to determine how Carlyle has been true to the artist within himself while reflecting the anxieties of his age.

The writer's creative urge has always been the source of his inspiration and the best in him are those pieces of writings in which the thinker and the artist are completely identified with each other. We may legitimately ask which artistic devices did Carlyle use to make his writings artistic. The satisfactory answer to this question will decide the artistic significance of his works which mainly deal with the socio-religious problems of his age.

Broadly speaking, three literary trends are discernible in the Victorian age which is characterized by the conflict between the newly-discovered evolutionary theory and the traditional religious faith regarding the creation of man. The Tennysonian compromise between the new scientific knowledge and the religious faith was, according to some critics, a very weak and unhealthy compromise between the two contrary notions. The artists who have depicted the age faithfully, without being uprooted from the religious faith, however, represent another significant trend. The artists, who were firmly rooted in their optimistic faith either retreated into the glory of the ancient past or withdrew themselves into their own aesthetic world as protest against the vulgarites of the age. Such artists represent another reaction. There was, however, a third group of artists whom, Hugh Walker in his *History of Victorian Literature*, preferred to call as the poets of 'sceptical reaction', the chief representatives of which were Clough and Arnold.[4] These are, however, no hard and fast categories. Often an artist does not seem to react to the problems of the age in accordance with a uniform pattern and the three broad categories appear to be overlapping.

Carlyle belongs to that category of writers who neither withdrew into the world of art leaving behind the turbulent world to take care of itself nor did they sacrifice art for the sake of photographic representation of the existing realities of contemporary

world. He lived in his own world and faced all the problems as the consequence of which he himself became the anguished voice of the Victorian England in which, because of the impact of the Darwinian theory, man had been torn asunder between the spiritual being made in God's own image and his animal-like existence. The thinker in Carlyle raises certain fundamental questions the relevance of which cannot be denied even today.

Browning believed that since God was in Heaven, everything was right with the world. But Carlyle asks if God is in Heaven, why everything was not right with the world? Is man a mere animal? If not, what is it that distinguishes him from a tool? Carlyle's writings raise many such questions which aim at determining man's proper place in the world which he thought was the reflection of God's glory. His writings are characterized by the duality between the actual and the real world and a longing to unify once again the indivisible human soul. The divided man, searching for his own lost soul, is discernible everywhere in his works.

In *Sartor Resartus*, which came out in three books in 1838, the reader is introduced to a writer who wishes to represent his age with all its problems. Apparently, Carlyle seems to be writing a series of essays on art (or, it could be science as well) of clothing but what harmonizes them is the character of Herr Teufelsdrockh. But what is more important than this

is the ever-present wandering spirit which doubts all that it observes. It is the author's own inquisitive spirit that raises the discourse on dress to metaphysical heights. The thinker in him raises the question which the writer answers artistically. This duality in Carlyle's work operates on more than one level. The visible world appears to be the world of reality to human perception but what appears to be the natural is only the illusion. The ideal world which exists in the writer's mind is the world that matters because it energizes the material world. The tension exists between the material and the ideal, the visible and the invisible. The invisible has to be perceived only through the power of imagination. Carlyle thinks that the divided self of the Victorian man is because of the conflict between the world as it was and the world as he thought it to be. He emphasizes the hidden meaning of the universe to suggest the distinction between the Darwinian animal-like man and the God-created man. Man, who has been made in God's own image, must discover the spiritual meaning of his life. Carlyle refuses to regard man as a machine because it is the soul which distinguishes him from a machine. His writings reflect the writer's painful realization of the loss of the human soul. But what he seems to be striving to achieve in his work is the undivided and integrated self which is repeatedly suggested by the references to the 'celestial music'. In music different musical notes achieve fusion only when the notes of disharmony are discarded. The three books

of *Sartor Resortus* proceed from disharmony to harmony, from conflict to its resolution. He is eager to bring about the wholeness of the human soul which has been split up into two parts. Carlyle's thoughts are turned into art by the devices he employs. The artist in him struggles, to fuse his reflections about the problems of his age with the artistic spirit and turns the whole writing into a piece of art. The fusion is achieved between his social consciousness and the artistic sensibility. How does Carlyle achieve this synthesis? The artist in him employs four devices to arrive at the synthesis from apparently anti-thetical positions. They are humour, irony, discovering similarities in apparently dissimilar objects and finally the artistic use of the language.

In the 'Preliminary' itself the writer captures the reader's attention by telling him that 'the creation of a world is little mysterious than the cooking of a dumpling.'[5] This is the beginning of the process which betrays the mysterious working of Carlyle's imaginative faculty. Almost like the metaphysicals he unifies different objects which apparently appear to be dissimilar to a man of ordinary imagination. The reader begins to read the book with the expectation that he would be reading a discourse on the art of decorating his naked body with clothes. Carlyle's writings are full of many surprises. While reading apparently simple instructions regarding the clothing

of the 'naked animal', one is startled by the writer's casual observations about 'man being emphatically a proselytizing creature', and 'man being a tool using animal.' When the reader comes to the fifth chapter of the first book, the art of decorating the body is turned into the philosophy of clothes and the love of putting on body-beautifying dresses becomes a foolish love of ornament. This is how Carlyle shifts his emphasis from the attractive-looking visible world to that of metaphysical depth and intensity. He then comes to the central question. What is man? Is he what he apparently looks like or is he what he sincerely and intensely feels and thinks? Carlyle here interrupts the stream of oratary to define man and asks himself whether man's definition as a tool-using animal is precise and the best. The question-form is important because it raises doubts about what appears to be finally settled. One question leads to another:

> Man is called a Laughing Animal: but do not the apes also laugh or attempt to do it; and is the man liest the greatest and oftenest longer. Still less do we make of the French definition of the cooking Animal Can a Tartar be said to cook, when he only readies his strength by riding on it?[6]

This questions lead us to Teufelsdrockh's final conclusion that Man is a Tool-using Animal. The repetition of this phrase makes the reader realize the emergence of a man with a new scientific knowledge as a powerful means to unravel the mystery of the universe. With the tool man digs up black stones from

'the bosom of the earth' and transports this luggage at the rate of five-and-thirty miles an hour. The toll-making animal may be an apt definition of a worker living in the industrial age but he contains his search for 'Episcopus', the Overseer of Soul, who can look deep into the mystery of what he terms as the 'harmonious Nature.' The meaninglessness of this apparently visible universe is repeatedly suggested by the mock-seriousness of the style combined with the artist's own discovery of some kind of similarity in apparently dissimilar objects. This gives rise to humour.

The sense of subtle irony manifests itself at many places in a very artistic manner. He ironically mentions the natural pouches, of the Kangaroo and refers to what he terms as the master organ, soul's seat and true pineal gland of the body social; a purse. Trancendentalism is combined with what he calls descententalism. The vulgar logic is sarcastically mentioned in his writings. It is contrasted with practical reason and arguments and it is opposed to experience. He ironically terms Darwin's book on species as the 'Origin of Evil', Carlyle's use of irony does not clearly manifest itself but it is used as a subtle weapon to suggest the writer's meaning. This artistic device exposes the utter futility of the new-fangled ideas prevalent in the Nineteenth century and the meaninglessness of the phenomena visible to the naked eyes. Carlyle regards the 'thinking man' as the worst

enemy of the 'Prince of Darkness.' One who thinks knows the mystery of this dream-like existence.

Carlyle's use of irony is a powerful artistic tool which separates all that appears to him untrue from what he considers to be true. His own perception of the mystery of this world leads him, first of all, to discover for himself the source of the mystery of human existence and, later on, enables his reader to experience it himself. When the falsehood is identified, human consciousness proceeds towards the ultimate achievement of the harmonious self.

Carlyle uses language like a social thinker and also almost like a poet who understands the language of nature when he unravels the mystery of the human existence. First of all, he acquaints his reader with the social and philosophical problems of the scientific-cum-industrial age. But this is not the finest use of the language. The poet in Carlyle ultimately triumphs and enables him to identify himself with nature which appears to him to be dancing with joy. He is sympathetic towards the 'soft influences' of nature.

In the fifth chapter of the second book entitled 'Romance', the expressions such as the 'aesthetic tea', 'musical coffee' and the 'pure voices making the stillness live' are the manifestations of Carlyle's 'double awareness.' In such places he has become a poet in accordance with his own definition of poetry and his prose is made to serve the higher purpose. He looks with joy the rich foliage and thousand flowers of

different hues and odours and feels delighted with the remote mountain peaks and the melody of the birds and happy creatures. This is the music that arises out of the complete identification of man with nature enabling the wanderer of this world to rediscover the indivisible soul.

For Carlyle man is neither a tool-using animal nor a laughing and eating animal but he is the soul and it is his spirit which distinguishes him from ordinary animals. If man has come to the present state of physical development through the evolutionary process, who has given him soul? The intangible and mysterious soul is the God-given gift to man. Carlyle's divine interpretation of the visible phenomena is a subtle and effective irony of Darwinian theory about the origin of the creature. The material world is liveless if it is not moved by the idea. Idea manifests itself. The visible world is the illusion but the invisible is omnipotent and it is the only reality. After the realization of the spiritual source of life, the visible world of illusion is blended with the hidden one which we all feel intensely.

The duality between the visible phenomena and the invisible idea is happily blended in man's identification with the harmonious nature. The perfect fusion of the two gives rise to the 'celestrial music' which the poet in Carlyle enjoys spiritually. Man's spiritual self emerges to subdue his animality. Carlyle re-discovered the missing soul in the animal-looking

creature called man and made him one whole integrated self capable of regarding the visible phenomena as the reflection of God's beauty and glory. The 'Everlasting No' and the 'Everlasting Yea' are the declaration of Carlyle's faith. The former is the drama of his soul while the latter is the declaration of his faith. The 'everlasting no' is characterized by a very intense conflict between hope, belief and faith on the one hand and doubt and unbelief on the other. Devil is opposing God. The material world is contrasted with the divine source of life. The soul of man has gone astray because it refuses to see the invisible source of creation. The professor thought that 'doubt had darkened into unbelief and shade after shade goes dimly over our soul till we have the fixed, starless tartarean black.' The doubts that he raises are resolved in the strong hope which he asserts finally. Carlyle seems to be suggesting that, in spite of man's unspeakable longing, he can see God nowhere, if his eyes are sealed. God is, nevertheless, present in his own heart and His heavenly-written Law still stands legible and sacred. The final answer to the soul-searching doubts raised by man finally leads him to the 'everlasting no.'

Thus, had the 'Everlasting no' peeled authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my Me; and than was it that my whole Me stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its protest. Such a protest, the most important transaction in life, may that same Indignation and

Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The everlasting no, had said: 'Behold, and the universe is mine (the Devil's)"; to which my whole me now made answer: "I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee"[7]

Thus, Carlyle's final answer to all the doubts and the searching questions that had come to his mind is ultimately found in his emphatic 'no'. The 'Everlasting No' is the outer manifestation of the inner drama of Carlyle's soul.

The 'Everlasting yea' is the emphatic assertion of his faith. He discovers in man's soul the higher being who finds blessedness which is the source of his strength and freedom in contemporary world of doubt and scepticism. The poet, the priest and the martyrs have all spoken and suffered but preached the God-inspired doctrine of the universe. The 'everlasting yea' is: "Love not pleasure; love God.' The realization of the divine source of life gives the Biblical simplicity to the language:

> Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produced it in God's name' Tis the utmost, utmost thou hust in thee: out with it, thou. Up, up! Whatsoever they findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.[8]

The social thinker, seer and the preacher are all merged with the artist and the language is put to its finest use. Carlyle's social consciousness and his poetic

sensibility are happily blended and he achieves in the world of art what he wanted to get in the actual world. It was Carlyle's desire to bring about a healthy synthesis between religion and the new scientific knowledge, the real and the ideal. Carlyle's commitment to the problems of his age is very much like that of an artist who seeks their solution in his own artistic world. His social consciousness brings him closer to the modern reader who still continues his search for the soul which has been lost in the material world. In his writings Carlyle displays 'double awareness'. He dealt with the problems of his age, but at same time, he did not altogether leave out the aesthetic sensibilities to take care of themselves. It is the fusion of the existing reality with art that makes *Sartor Resartus* a great work of art.

Carlyle did not permanently withdraw into the past glory. He applied his mind to understand the eternal philosophical postulations and presented his own idealistic solutions. To a modern reader Carlyle is more than a typical Victorian writer. Some of the questions that he has raised have a touch of everlastingness in them. The perennial questions regarding the definition of man, his proper place in the universe and his equation with nature are some of the problems that crop up repeatedly in Carlyle's writings. Besides representing the disturbed Victorian England, his is the articulate voice of the inquisitive

spirit of man. This is Carlyle, the social being. This is the level of his social awareness. The artist's imaginative faculty brings the aesthetic sensibility closest to his social awareness. Carlyle's best writings are the finest examples of the perfect fusion of the writer's social awareness with his aesthetic sensibilities.

4/1176H,
New Sir Syed Nagar,
Aligarh.

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Nikhat Taj

A Spot of Time Sucked into History- A New Historicist Approach to Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh's novel of 1988 – *The Shadow Lines* acquires a prophetic dimension, expressive of its author's concern and vision when read in light of the recent Indo-Pak bilateral peace process to promote people-to-people contact and 'alleviate the negative consequences of lines as borders among the people of the two countries.'[1]

It has been the curious and complex fate of Indians to think in terms of the two-nation theory. The paradigm of the two-nation theory aggressively and passionately advocates the homogeneity of all that lies 'within' the boundary against the alienness of what lies 'outside' the boundary. Ernest Gellner has expressed this sentiment thus:

> Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness. It invents nations where they do not exist.[2]

In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh has tried to explode the myth of borders by interrogating the concept of borders and the very nature of the two-nation theory.

What matters as of today in Indo-Pak relationship is not borders but their 'character'. The aim of the current trend is to transform our borders into 'soft borders' so as to make peace with partition

and usher in an era of harmony and peaceful co-existence. This may not solve our problems but will make them look perhaps 'a little less different, less daunting and somewhat easier to resolve.'[3] The geo-politics of yesteryears of drawing boundaries and borders (only chalked a path of wars and destruction) have now given way to the present mood and mode of cultural poetics.

The emerging scenario of Indo-Pak relationship not only reflects but also affirms Ghosh's point-of-view in *The Shadow Lines*, thereby making it a relevant text in the understanding of the current political dialogue between the two countries. Amitav Ghosh in the novel through its core event-the Dhaka happening, treats the borders and demarcations as being 'shadow lines'-arbitrary and invented divisions which can lead only to terrible consequences. This forms the dialogic contention of the novelist and becomes the essential narrative of the literary text.

Tha'mma's innocent query in 1964 (as she prepares to fly to Dhaka) that would she be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane is ridiculed by her son. Did she think, he says:

> The border was a long black line with green on one side and scarlet on the other, like it was in the school atlas...[5]

Perplexed but spirited is her reply:

> Of course not. But surely there is something trenches perhaps, or soldiers, or guns pointing at each other, or even just barren strips of land. Don't they call it no-man's-land?

When she is made to understand that there is nothing of this sort, her pathetic musing expostulates the thematic concern of the novelist:

> But if there aren't any trenches or any thing, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then- partition and all the killing and everything –if there isn't something in between?[6]

That the violence and bloodshed of the partition had not resulted in a physical boundary between the two countries leaves Tha'mma bewildered and aghast. Her disillusionment and dislocation increases further, when she has to mention her place of birth on the passport form:

> and at that moment, she had not been able to quite understand how her place of her birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality.[7]

The very act of Partition asserts the point of political separatism and injects the inevitable consciousness of socio-cultural differences. Physical movement may be controlled or restricted between two countries but there are no boundaries as far as emotions are concerned. This is what the 'Mu-i-Mubarak' and 'Dhaka' episodes seem to articulate:

> What the narrator learns, is that the separatist logic of the nation state cannot enforce cultural differences. That some 'other' thing will always connect Culcutta to Dhaka, Bengali to Bengali, Indian to Pakistani as images in a vast mirror.[8]

Perversely it is through the 'riots'—'in the self-destructive violence that the people of the sub-continent assert a mutuality of response, asserting a common inheritance and affiliation.'[9] In his meditations on these issues, the narrator informs:

> They had drawn their borders believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the pre-historic Gondwanaland. What had they felt, I wondered, when they discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet-undiscovered irony—the irony that killed Tridib: the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines—so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka, a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free our looking-glass border.[10]

The Shadow Lines as a novel attempts to become a language that articulates this mutuality of response and the new historicist approach to the events helps in understanding this language.

The novel does not narrate the events sequentially. It flaunts the linear time frame by frequent time shifts thereby breaking the sense of continuity and linearity which history offers. It denies the teleological

perspective in favour of a hybrid perspective and simultaneous presence of different truths. The narrative comes filtered through the singular consciousness of its unnamed narrator—not limited to his own life, rather he lives out the events in his memory and imagination. Ghosh has tried to erase the shadow line that separates 'reality from memory, past from present and from what happens to oneself from what has happened to others.'[11]. The frequent time switches of the novel, thus underline a process whereby the narration of the real past of one person, prepares the narrator's encounter with the same reality via memory-an experience which is lived and which is narrated. The novelist seems to view time as a shaping force of man's individual and collective history and weaves the different narratives into a satisfying whole. 'The precise mention of dates and locations' comments A.N. Kaul, 'only helps to draw attention to the sameness of the underlying experience.'[12]

The 'Dhaka' episode, intimately intertwined with the private upheavals in the life of Tha'mma, Robi and May becomes a 'spot of time' in the course of the personal narrative, to privilege the readers as it does the narrator, to juxtapose the main event of the literary text with the politics of the then era- the historic Mu-i-Mubarak incident. Details of the Dhaka happening are narrated to him over the years by Robi and May, both horrified eye witnesses to the drama of violence enacted in the streets of Dhaka which had resulted in

the grisly deaths of Tridib, Jethomoshai and Raheem the rickshaw-puller. These facts are pieced together and narrativized by him in the course of the novel. The novel flashes across space and time to posit the personal narratives against the context of historical happening. The narrator as the authorial voice makes a study of those absences and fissures that mark the 'sites' of personal and national trauma. As an archivist of the family stories he tries to voice the 'silences' of the event.

The Dhaka episode is marked by subtle significations that allow the narrator to explore the real world as constituted in and through history, politics and society; as well as through the perceptions and values of men and women (characters) living in it. The novel acts as both the 'text' and 'cotext' from the new historicist perspective:

a) The narrativized Dhaka incident as it enfolds in the life of its characters (text).

b) The documented, official facts from newspapers as explored and gathered by the narrator negotiate with the social, political history of the same era (cotext).

It is the narrator's privilege to view memories of the past as experiences permanently available. An attribute, an ability taught and chiseled to perfection by Tridib. The freedom to range through geography and history and to make them vivid constructs of

knowledge (for his imaginative universe knows as boundaries) enables the narrator to see in the mind's eye more vividly than in actuality: for Tridib had taught him the use of imagination that could carry:

> One beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror.[13]

This lesson guides the narrator to dissolve the borders between the real event and the narrated event; to find the keys and coordinates between the public event and private happening; to make available the contemporaneity of the past; and to be able to see the historical context as vital to any understanding of the present. He discovers the Dhaka event (personal) and Mu-i-Mubarak incident (public) as inextricably intertwined with one another. Thus the public chronicles of a nation—newspapers—are thoroughly researched and interrogated by him to collate with the sequence of events that frame his life.

The Shadow Lines demonstrates through its crucial and essential narrative, to express it in Louis Montrose's words 'a reciprocal concern with the textuality of history, the historicity of texts.'[14] The documented details of the historical event of Mu-i-Mubarak predicate both the accuracy as well as a firm knowledge of what has happened. This public version of history gathered from 'old newspapers' brings into light a whole chain of historic, political happenings—

beginning with the theft of the holy relic Mu-i-Mubarak in Srinagar, to civil strife in post-partition Dhaka, to a riot in Calcutta, to a cycle of violence in both India and Pakistan. These old news-papers as relevant historical documents, read not merely as subordinated 'contexts' but are analysed by the narrator in their own right to become the 'cotext'.[15]

Amitav Ghosh through the narrator's quest for archival evidences, attends to the new historicist's attention to the political and cultural climate that engenders the fictional happening in the novel. This historical mode is grounded on the concept which takes a literary or historical text as a discourse consisting of representations – that is verbal formations which are the 'ideological products' or 'cultural constructs' of a particular era or society.[16] Thus the literary event can be seen as embedded in the historical moment; the text (Dhaka – Tridib's death – riots) and cotext (Mu-i-Mubarak- demonstrations – riots in India and Pakistan) become expression of the same historical happening/ spot of time. Private and public narratives interpenetrate. History surges around ordinary lives to determine their shape and colour and to define the organizing principle behind the happening. The Mu-i-Mubarak issue reads as an 'anecdote' (historical document) which appears isolated and remote from the plot of the narrative text. But when subjected to a close reading or a 'thick description' in Clifford Geertz terminology, it reveals the beliefs, norms and rhetorical

ploys of power that are implicit in it, as well as to expose similar cultural configurations in the major/ catastrophic happening in the literary text.

The Dhaka mob frenzy is subject to the particular condition of the time and place, expressive not only of the orthodox but also the subversive forces of the era in which it is located. Furthermore, the artistic resolution of the literary plot serves to cover the unresolved political and cultural conflicts[17*] of Indo-Pak people that makeup the real tensions underlying the surface meaning of the novel *The Shadow Lines*.

> By the end of January 1964 the riots had faded away from the pages of the newspapers, disappeared from the collective imagination of 'responsible opinion', vanished, without leaving a trace in the histories and bookshelves. They had dropped out of memory into the crater of a volcano of silence.[18]

Hence the novel as a critical piece of writing constructs rather than discovers ready-made textual meanings of the literary and cultural histories it narrates. The analysed text as 'literary text' and 'co-text' acts as a discursive 'site' to negotiate an insight and meaning into the interests and power structures of the Indo-Pak scene.

In the final section of the novel, the narrator in the year 1979—fifteen years away from the Calcutta riots of 1964—finds himself unnerved by the possibility that all these years, the terror that had surrounded his memory of the Calcutta riots and his belief in their

importance was nothing but a memory of an imagined event. Determined not to let his 'past vanish without a trace' he begins a desperate search (in the archives of the Teen Murti House Library) to recover the lost event—the riot of 1964, indelibly engraved in his memory but which in 1979 seemed to have vanished. Disconcerting to the extreme is the knowledge (as he discovers in his research), that these silences are constitutive of the identity of the post-colonial sub-continental nation states of India and Pakistan. They happen to emphasize the commonality that to be Indian is to perversely define oneself against one's mirror image from across the border. The perception of violence as spawned by people is mobilized by some form of shared hatred or sympathy. This forms the crucial signification of the novel:

> In fact, from the evidence of the newspapers, it is clear that once the riots had started both governments did everything they could to put a stop to them as quickly as possible. In this they were subject to a logic larger than themselves, for the madness of a riot is a pathological inversion, but also therefore of a reminder, of that indivisible sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments. And that prior, independent relationship is the natural enemy of government, for it is in the logic of states that to exist at all they must claim the monopoly of all relationships between peoples.[19]

It was thus sitting in the air-conditioned calm of an exclusive library that the narrator begins his

strangest journey 'a voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distances; a land of looking-glass events.'[20] The narrator confesses that:

> I could not have perceived that there was something more than an incidental connection between those events of which I had a brief glimpse from the windows of the bus, in Calcutta and those other events in Dhaka, simply because Dhaka was in another country.[21]

This particular section of the novel (pages 218-233) reads as a reportage or a historical document; the public chronicle of the history of the then national events. The ghost of the 'riots' makes the narrator reconstruct the past thereby evoking the quality of a lived experience rather than history. His exclusive research (to build-up events to authenticate and bear testimony to the story of his life) by reading old newspapers transport him in time to bring alive the happenings to the readers:

> There is nothing quite as evocative as an old newspaper. There is something in its urgent contemporaneity [...] still crying out in bold print as though it were all happening now, today—and the feeling besides, that she may once have handled, if not that very paper, then its exact likeness, its twin, which transports one in time as nothing else can.[22]

The riots in Calcutta and the riots in Khulna, were but reactionary in nature whose epi-centre lay in Srinagar, connected with the disappearance of the sacred relic 'Mu-i-Mubarak' (believed to be the hair of Prophet

Mohammad himself) from the Hazratbal Mosque on 27 December, 1963. In the Kashmir valley, where the theft had taken place, there was not one single recorded incident of animosity between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. For the Hazratbal Mosque (where the sacred relic was installed), had over the centuries become a great centre of pilgrimage to a multitude of people Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. Thus hundreds of men and women in collective display of harmony, joined peaceful demonstrations against the government authorities unable to locate the relic. In Khulna, on the other hand, miles away from Srinagar, a similar procession turned violent, resulting in an overpowering spectacle of rioting, looting and killing. Khulna is not quite one hundred miles from Calcutta; 'the two cities face each other at a watchful equidistance across the border',23 but the distance between Khulna and Srinagar measured nearly 2000 kilometres. As the narrator draws his amazing circle, on Tridib's atlas, he learns the meaning of distance:

> It showed me that Hanoi, Chungking are nearer Khulna than Srinagar, and yet, did the people of Khulna care at all about the fate of the mosques in Vietnam and South China (a mere stone's throw away)? I doubted it. But in this other direction, it took no more than a week..[24]

Khulna's rioting was countered by similar violence in Calcutta; (as witnessed by the narrator as a child and woven into the narrative texture of the novel to become the focal point of his later research into history). From this point onwards the archival details collected and

analysed by the narrator read as a narrative of complicity regarding the riots. The narrator reconstructs the sequence of events officially reported in the newspaper to the time of the outbreak of violence on 10 January 1964 in Calcutta. It is important to note here, that on 4 January 1964, the Mu-i-Mubarak was recovered; reinstalled on 10 January and reported in the newspapers of 11 January.

The narrator notes that once the rioting had begun in Khulna it was difficult to contain it. Violence spread into the neighbouring towns and districts towards Dhaka with a frenzy of looting, killing and burning. Refugees started pouring over the border into India. A few Calcutta dailies printed pictures of stranded and weeping refugees. On 8 and 9 January, with refugees still pouring in, rumours began to flow through the city—'especially that familiar old rumour, the harbinger of every serious riot—that the trains from Pakistan were arriving packed with corpses.'[25] And so on 10 January, the mobs went rampaging killing muslims, burning and looting shops and houses. Calcutta had erupted.[26**]

The official narrative of details gathered from the newspaper reports, bridges the gulf between the actual, historical event and the personal memory of the same (riots) as recounted by the narrator:

> All I could have told them about was of the sound of voices running past the walls of my school, and of a glimpse of a mob in Park Circus. The silent terror that surrounded my memory of those events, and my

> belief in their importance, seemed laughably out of proportion to those trivial recollections.[27]

The collective memory of the public event and the individual memory of the narrator thus converge and collude together to give voice, meaning and definition to that 'silence' of fifteen years. His past had not vanished without a trace; official history had validated and authenticated its existence.

Every word expressed about those events of 1964, is the product of the narrator's struggle with silence; a silence which had seemed to lie outside the reach of his intelligence, beyond words:

> The enemy of silence is speech, but there can be no speech without words, and there can be no words without meanings—so it follows, inexorably, in the manner of syllogisms, that when we try to speak of events of which we do not know the meaning, we must lose ourselves in the silence that lies in the gap between words and the world.[28]

However, fifteen years later (1979), this silence finds a voice, a meaning, a signification. The narrator discovers a whole series of truths connecting his bus ride back from school with the events that befall Tridib and others in Dhaka and they, in turn all sync with the Hazratbal incident. The personal narratives of Tha'mma, Tridib, Robi and May find a public version of the happening, as the narrator wades his way through the documented reports, to reveal the interests and power structures of the sub-continent scene.

The Hazratbal event and the riots of 1964 bear testimony to the intertextuality of literature and history. They support the view that representations in the novel (literary text) are not mere reflectors of reality but concretized form of ideology offering a political reading. 'The primary aim of a political reader of a literary text is to undo these ideological disguises and suppressions in order to uncover the historical and political conflicts, and oppressions which are the text's true although covert and unmentioned subject matter'[29]

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is a powerfully moving, analytical and eloquent representation which interrogates some of the key certainties of the modern nation formation, and discovers its limits. The novel is a dialogic telling of the history of two-nation theory and tries to find the keys and co-ordinates for its proper understanding. The narrator's memories and experiences provide the structure for the narrative as his consciousness mediates and frames other voices and details and even interrogates the telling of the story. In the novel, the 'riots' are not merely happenings but a trope for the novelist's point of view:

> A reminder of that indivisible sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments.[30]

Thus what the author contends in his novel finds a voice of affirmation and confirmation in today's Indo-Pak politics. The mood of the relationship

between the two countries is dependent on a political dialogue that is sending out a clear message about 'soft borders' as the only way to transcend boundaries of hostility. Clearly the people of the two nations are entitled as well as ready to participate and further the peace process. People of both the countries are for strengthening the bonds they have always shared; it is time for them to rediscover the heritage, culture and language that they hold in common but torn apart by the partition. Public and political opinion is in favour to forge constructive ties. The participation of Pakistan in the recent re-enactment of the Dandi March and cultural exchanges reinforce the truth that Amitav Ghosh has tried to explore and express in his 1988 novel—*The Shadow Lines*.

Women's College,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh.

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2. Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: 1964), p. 169.
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4. Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* (New Delhi: OUP, 1995), p. 151. All subsequent references will be to this edition.
5. *Ibid.* p. 151.
6. *Ibid.* p. 151.
7. *Ibid.* p. 152.
8. Suvir Kaul, "Separation Anxiety" in *The Shadow Lines with Critical Essays*, Educational edition (New Delhi: OUP, 1995), p. 281.
9. *Ibid.* p. 281.
10. *The Shadow Lines*, p. 233.
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12. *Ibid.* p. 305.
13. *The Shadow Lines*, p. 29.
14. Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction toLiterary and Cultural Theory* (M.U.P: 1995), p. 172.
15. *Ibid.* p. 173.
16. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, sixth edition (Prism Books Pvt. Ltd; Bangalore:

1993), p. 249.

17.* The narrator observes that it was evident from the newspapers that once the riots had started 'responsible opinion' in both India and Pakistan reacted with identical horror and outrage. The university communities of both Dhaka and Calcutta organized peace marches and newspapers on both sides of the border did fine human pieces of reporting. As for the two governments, which had earlier traded a series of curiously symmetrical accusations, now once the riots started, even more curiously did everything to put a stop to them. In fact a congratulatory note entered into their exchanges, for successfully quelling the disturbances.

18. *The Shadow Lines*, p. 230.
19. *Ibid.* p. 230.
20. *Ibid.* p.224.
21. *Ibid.* p.219.
22. *Ibid.* p. 227.
23. *Ibid.* p. 231.
24. *Ibid.* p. 232.
25. *Ibid.* p. 229.

26.** Army was called in to control the situation in both the countries; yet stray incidents of arson and looting continued for a few days in Dhaka and Calcutta. It took about a week before the papers could declare 'normalcy' had been restored.

27. *The Shadow Lines*, p. 221.
28. *Ibid.* p. 218.
29. M.H. Abrams, *op. cit*, p. 252.
30. *The Shadow Lines*, p. 230.

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Mohammad Asim Siddiqui

Author as Narrator: Notes on Milan Kundera's Narrative Technique in *Life is Elsewhere*

Talking about *Life is Elsewhere*, Milan Kundera pointed out that the novel rests on certain questions like, what is the lyrical attitude, how is youth a lyrical age, what is the meaning of the triad: lyricism/ revolution/youth, and what is it to be a poet?[1] Jaromil, the main character of the novel, is a poet whose life from infancy to early adulthood in a politically charged atmosphere provides Kundera an opportunity to explore the meaning of what Kundera terms European revolution in his native country and its effect on all walks of life including the world of art. How the young protagonist's personality is shaped by the dominant ideology of his time, and how even the very subject matter and style of his poetry is chosen by this ideology, is the subject of Kundera's ironic gaze in this early but important novel of his literary career.

Though one will agree with Kundera about the subject matter of this novel, it will be difficult to agree with him when he explains that each of the seven parts of the novel 'is told from the viewpoint of a different imaginary self.'[2]While there is focus on different characters in different parts and the tempo of the narrative also does not remain the same in each part, all seven parts of the novel are told from the point of

view of a narrator who is only partly dramatized. All seven parts see the brief intervention of the author. It is interesting to note that in most of Kundera's works there are passages where the author appears to speak directly to the reader on a number of subjects making thereby the distinction between the reliable narrator and the second self of the author present in his work, what Wayne C. Booth terms ' implied author', far from clear.[3] On his part Kundera justifies his interventions on the ground of their playful and ironic tone and because of his need to think for his character what the character cannot think himself. He obviously implies that the apparent author-speak should not be taken as didactic authorial intervention. 'Yes , it is the author speaking, but everything he says is valid only within the magnetic field of a character.'[4]Kundera's interventions together with his frequent philosophical meditations in his works should be seen in the context of his theory of novelistic counterpoint which unites philosophy, narrative, and dream.[5] In any case it is not very difficult to construct an image of his second self from his novels as almost the same self cries out from most of his works. The omniscient narrator in his writings very often turns out to be an aspect of this second self. This narrator, more often than not, intrudes into the action of his novels.

Life is Elsewhere bears an unmistakable influence of this strong intrusive narrator. The ironic intent of this very prominent narrative voice is visible

throughout the novel and the narrator comes across as a very human presence, firmly rooted in history, and distinguished by his clear preferences, strong opinions and fairly pronounced biases. He is able to make a pecking order of some values, which makes him change his tone from subject to subject. Another characteristic of this narrator is to act as guide and companion of the reader, which obviously makes it important for him to nurture a relationship with his readers. The omniscient mode accords him a privileged access to the minds of his characters enabling him to provide an inside view of all his characters. Within this omniscient mode, the narrator, speaking in first person and regularly intruding into the story, never fights shy of showing his self-conscious nature. He keeps stressing his presence all through the story. Thus almost at the beginning of the novel, talking about Mama's love for the engineer, the narrator remarks: 'I've already explained this in the previous chapter.'[6] Or, noticing the development of Jaromil's linguistic abilities, he comments: 'Skipping a few pages, we come upon a remark that catches our attention with its rhythm' (p.12).Many more examples can be extracted from the text where the narrator intrudes his narrative. However, as the narrator is not fully dramatized and influences the narrative from some distance, it will be correct to designate him a self-conscious- partly-dramatized- narrator.

A close reading of the role of the narrator in *Life is Elsewhere* does not only go counter to the author's opinion about the point of view in this novel, but also helps in looking at all seven parts of the novel as being linked together by the narrator's strong presence.

Like Henry James, for whom the only absolute requirement that a story must have is that 'it be interesting', Kundera's narrator is very conscious of the fact that his narrative must not appear dull and flat.[7] As if aware of the fact that his readers might turn away from him, he reassures them: 'No, no don't worry, I don't intend to retell the tired old story of the rich kid his schoolmates hate...'(p.17). And contrary to Ford Madox Ford's caveat that a novelist must not, by taking sides, exhibit his preferences, the narrator in *Life is Elsewhere* not only takes sides but also unabashedly mouths his preferences.[8]

One way of exhibiting these preferences is by treating his subject with irony. The ironic stance of the narrator is evident throughout the novel. It informs the judgment of the painter finding the depiction of 'the original inner world' in young Jaromil's drawings of people with dogs' heads. The irony lies in the fact that Jaromil drew dogs' heads because he could not draw a human face. Mama's affair with the painter also has unmistakable ironic undertones: 'She had always dreamed of a love in which her body and soul, hand in hand, would grow old together...but now...she found her soul painfully young and her body painfully

old... she saw it as proof that their first rendezvous was something other than a conspiracy of bodies taking advantage of a situation' (p.36).Mama's marriage and widowhood are also treated in ironic terms: 'her marriage had been joyless, but her widowhood was grand and glorious' (p.79).It was during her widowhood that 'she was brought into adultery not by her sensuality but by her innocence' (p.74).Irony is also used to good effect whenever a reference is made to 'our young socialist republic' (p.215).

An aspect of the narrator's ironic self is his impulse towards burlesque and parody. A whole lot of subjects ranging from love to poetry are burlesqued by the narrator in an effort to show the unstable ground on which they rest. Jaromil's sentimental and immature love for the redheaded girl is a target of the narrator's burlesquing stare. The thought of his very easy conquest of her beloved makes Jaromil very unhappy as, to his immature mind, it is a confirmation of her being a woman of easy virtue. He, however, is able to put his mind at ease once he rationalizes that 'a great love, which abruptly arrives like a lightning bolt, frees a woman at one stroke from all shame and inhibition, and she, just because she is pure and innocent, gives herself to her lover just as quickly as a loose woman...'(p.176). The burlesquing of their trivial romantic relationship is complete when Jaromil fully prepares himself to consider his girlfriend a saint of love. He is now no longer bothered by her ugly looks

because he reflects that 'it was not difficult to love someone dazzling, perfect, elegant: such love was a meaningless reflex automatically aroused in by the accident of beauty; but a great love wishes to create a beloved being precisely out of an imperfect creature, a creature all the more human for her imperfection'(p.177).

All his rhapsodizing on love appears ridiculous when he has to run away from the beautiful filmmaker, much as he desired her, because of his ugly underwear. His outward response, however, even on this occasion can be read as a romantic kitsch:

> ...a single great love to which we devote everything we have within us is worth more than a thousand fleeting affairs; that having his girlfriend was having all women; that his girlfriend was so protean, her love so infinite, that he could experience with her more unexpected adventures than a Don Juan with his1,003 women(p.204).

It must be argued, however, that the end result of the narrator's burlesquing of Jaromil's love is as much its criticism as its entertainment value. Criticism is the vehicle of burlesque not its raison d'etre. James M. Cox puts it succinctly: 'If burlesque fails to amuse it has failed, no matter how brilliantly it has criticized, no matter how much sham it has penetrated, for the sermon also criticizes and penetrates sham.'[9]

More than the sentimental love, it is poetry--the very nature of it-- which is the target of the burlesquing self of the narrator. Kundera's burlesquing of poetry can also be read as an ideological critique of

both romantic and modernist poetry. Stephen Ross identifies what he calls Kundera's 'antimodernist modernism as an ideological as well as an aesthetic position.'[10] It can be said that an antiromantic and antimodernist kind of modernism informs the narrator's treatment of poetry in *Life is Elsewhere*. A poet can not be faulted for saying one thing one day and contradicting it the next. All assertions, all opinions, all reflections are true in poetry. The poet can say today that 'life is as useless as tears' and tomorrow the same poet can announce that 'life is as joyous as laughter' and he will be considered right both times. Thus Jaromil, given to writing poems exploring the eccentricities of his own self, has to change track to write poems which the revolution favoured. And what the revolution favoured is reducible to just a few clichés – poems about sunsets, roses, dewy grass, the stars, darkness, a melody heard from afar, nostalgia and of course Mama. Jaromil also feels drawn towards 'eternal beauties', to words like 'far away', 'silver', 'rainbow', 'love' and the much despised 'Oh!'.The subjects chosen by Jaromil read like the parody of popular romantic perception of poetry. And sure enough, since in the popular mind an unrhymed poem does not exist, he would turn to rhyme and rhythm as this would not only please his none- too-knowledgeable girlfriend but would also be in conformity with the prescriptions issued by the revolution.

The literature-loving narrator also probes the politics of rhyme and rhythm and its link to revolution. The communist revolution denounced free verse or even modern poetry as a 'product of the putrefying bourgeoisie' (p.163) because the magical power of rhyme and rhythm ensures an order and discipline for a world which is formless and lacking order. Commenting on the politics of rhyme and rhythm the narrator remarks:

> If in a poem the word "death" is in the same spot as the sound "breath" echoing in the preceding line, death becomes a melodious element of order. And even if the poem is protesting against death,death is automatically justified, at least as the theme of a beautiful protest.... Revolution has no desire to be examined or analyzed ,it only desires that the people merge with it; in this sense it is lyrical and in need of lyricism(pp.163-164).

Parody is also the key to Kundera's art of characterization in *Life is Elsewhere*. Episodes and incidents from the life of a number of canonical poets are used to highlight the whimsicalities and eccentricities of Jaromil, Mama and the painter. He finds some ludicrous parallel between the love life of Keats and Jaromil: ' "You must be mine to die upon the rack if I want you", the ill and jealous Keats wrote to his Fanny, and Jaromil, back home again in his childhood room, was writing a poem to calm himself"'(p.179). Given to making absolute statements and sweeping generalizations, the narrator, having

commented on the longing of all poets for glory, parodies Victor Hugo's and Jiri Orten's longing for glory in order to present Jaromil's longing for glory in a tongue- in- cheek manner: ' "O glory! O mighty deity!Ah, may your great name inspire me and my verse gain you," Victor Hugo implored(p.181). Jiri Ortem also needed to console himself: '"I am a poet, I am a great poet, and one day I shall be loved by the whole world[. .]"' (p.181).

There are a number of major and minor poets whose life is mentioned in the novel in an effort to parody poetry and to poke fun at his poet protagonist. Shelly, Rimbaud, Lermentov and Andre Breton are especially chosen for this part. (It might be recalled that the title of *Life is Elsewhere* is a quote from Rimbaud which was later adopted by Andre Breton as the last sentence of his Surrealist manifesto. The expression also echoed in May '68 revolution in France.).In fact in the case of Lermentov and Andre Breton the narrator makes it clear that Jaromil is merely 'a parody of Lermentov just as the painter with his leather coat and German shepherd is an imitation of Andre Breton' (p.254). Making an absolute statement the narrator asks: 'is not parody the eternal destiny of man' (p.254)? It can also be argued that the narrator's pompous theorizing on parody shows the self conscious nature of literature itself. A literary work is in some way bound to another work in a never ending intertextual scheme. Parody of some common themes of poetry and

the life of some celebrated poets present them in an incongruous context. As Terence Hawkes says 'the process indicates literature's permanent self-consciousness, and its continuous need for self appraisal and realignment.'[11]Questions like the nature of poetic fame, the subject matter of poetry, the rules of prosody, the surrealist stance on poetry, the relationship of a poet to his world and the writing of poetry to achieve some specific political ends go through this process of self appraisal in the novel. The incongruous mention of the poetic themes popular in an earlier period makes them appear comic which heightens the comic tone of *Life is Elsewhere*.

An important as well as interesting feature of Kundera's story telling technique in *Life is Elsewhere* is his narrator's relationship with what Gerald Prince very ingeniously terms ' the narratee.'[12] The self conscious narrator keeps addressing this narratee, confiding in him, guiding him and explaining to him his various moves .This narratee is evidently endowed with some characteristics, and as the story progresses, he becomes a function of the text .The narrator reports incidents and details of the story with the perspective of some decades, a perspective which is not fully appreciated by this narratee. Hence the former's need to convince him of the ' authenticity' of those incidents. Thus Jaromil's running away from the filmmaker because of his ugly underwear might not appear convincing to this narratee: 'You might say that this

was just a slight complication, that he could, for example, turn off the light so as not to be seen...'(p.203). 'Or you(the narratee) might perhaps remark that Jaromil could take off his bad looking undershorts together with his trousers'(p.203).The narratee, at one level, may not belong to any particular time and place as the following remark of the narrator may imply: 'The story of two people who are on the verge of becoming lovers is so eternal that we can almost forget the era in which it is taking place'(p.202).However, there are enough clues in the text to suggest that he is constructed in terms of a particular age, time and nationality. He is a Czech who belongs to the second half of the twentieth century: 'And yet, can anyone maintain that the National Police occupies less than one thirty-third of a place in our national life (p.196)?' He is not Jaromil's but the narrator's contemporary though he is possibly not made out to be as well informed and perceptive as the latter.

The narrator's relationship with the narratee helps in controlling the narrative. He is able to emphasize and order some values, distribute sympathies, implant some beliefs in his readers and at the same time denigrate some sacrosanct concepts. Thus Jaromil, despite having a complex about his looks, was sure that as far as his poetic fate was concerned he was 'one of the elect'(p.83).The narrator's comment, 'Let's stop at this word'(p.83) not only implants doubts

in the mind of the reader by ironically deflating the poetic pretensions of Jaromil, but it also helps in controlling his thematic material as, at a later point in the story , the narrator says that 'let's recall the word(elect)(p.201)'. As is clear from these comments, the narrator here makes a direct address to the narratee. In fact such direct addresses to the narratee abound in the novel. A few can serve as examples:

> Let's look for a moment longer at Jaromil sitting with his beer stein across the table from the Janitor,s son (p.186)
> Perhaps you know the beautiful poem by Jiri Orten(p.186)
> Look at the way he climbs, how he gauges every step (p.220)
> You too would like to live all your unrealized potentialities, all your possible lives. This novel is like you (p.229).

Another way how the narrator succeeds in implanting some beliefs in his readers and controlling his narrative is by making epigrammatic statements in a very authoritative manner .To recall a few :

> Death becomes real when it begins to penetrate a person through the fissures of aging p.(88).
> It (past) is clothed in mutable taffeta, and whenever we look back at it we see it in another color p.(89).
> Freedom does not begin where parents are rejected or buried, but where they do not exist (p.102).
> Poetry is a domain in which all assertions become true (p.179).
> Poets come from homes where women rule (p.82).
> The world of adults knows perfectly well that the absolute is an illusion (p.187).
> Mother love imprints a mark on boy's brows. (p.17).
> Intellect and physical force can sometimes

complement each other remarkably(p.19).
Revolution and youth are a pair (p.138).

Most of these statements touch Kundera's major thematic concerns and their ironic treatment in the novel. They relate to the lives of some poets who were tied to the apron-strings of their mother. They offer a very trenchant criticism of poetry. They also satirically treat the idea of innocence associated with childhood. Kundera's relationship with revolution and its impact on people, particularly on young and impressionable minds, is also summed up by some definitive statements made by the narrator. Scattered all through the novel, these epigrammatic statements subliminally help readers in forming their beliefs.

Department of English,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh.

Notes and References

1. Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel* (1986; New Delhi: Rupa, 1992), p.32.
2. *The Art of the Novel*, p.87.
3. Wayne C.Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press), p.71.I owe a debt to Booth for applying some of his ideas to the study of *Life is Elsewhere* in this paper.
4. *The Art of the Novel*, p.80.
5. Explaining the aesthetic of Hemingway, Faulkner and DosPassos and their difference from Musil, for whom Kundera feels great affinity, Kundera told an interviewer: A meditative intervention of the author into the narrative thread of his novel appears in this aesthetic as a displaced intellectualism, as something foreign to the very essence of the novel. A personal recollection: *The New Yorker* published the first three parts of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*—but they eliminated the passages on Nietzsche's eternal return! Yet, in my eyes, what I say about Nietzsche's eternal return has nothing to do with a philosophic discourse; it is a continuity of paradoxes that are no less novelistic (that is to say, they *answer* no less to the essence of what the novel is) than a description of the action or a dialogue. Bingo! Lois Oppenheim,

(that is to say, they *answer* no less to the essence of what the novel is) than a description of the action or a dialogue. Bingo! Lois Oppenheim, "Clarifications, Elucidations:An Interview With Milan Kundera",Center for Book Culture.org, www.centerforbookculture.org / interviews/interview_kundera.html.

6. Milan Kundera, *Life is Elsewhere*, trans.Aron Asher (1973; India: Faber and Faber, 2003), p.8.All further references to this book, from the reprinted edition, are indicated in the text of the paper by page numbers only.
7. Henry James, The *Art of Fiction* as quoted by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p.24.
8. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p.25
9. James M. Cox, Mark Twain: *The Fate of Humor* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), p.44.
10. Stephen Ross, 'The Abdication of Culture: The Ideology of Imagology in Milan Kundera's Immortality', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.2(Summer 2000),331-354(p.333).
11. Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1983), p.72.
12. Gerald Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee," in *Reader-ResponseCriticism: From Formalism to Post-strucuralism*,ed.Jane P.Tompkins (Baltimore, London:The John Hopkins University Press,1984),p.7.

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Madihur Rehman Suhaib

The Fragmented Self: Mark Twain's *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*

The Mysterious Stranger has long been a favourite of Mark Twain scholars. But the interest in the novel has largely been biographical. It has been used to evolve theories about the last decades of Mark Twain's life, his despair and cynicism, and to study the effects on his mind and personality of the tragedies that he suffered in his old age — his financial troubles and the deaths of two of his daughters and his wife. Van Wyck Brooks started the trend in 1920 with *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*. Bernard DeVoto gave it a psychoanalytical turn when he argued that in *The Mysterious Stranger*, "we see the psychic block removed, the dilemma resolved, the inhibition broken, the accusation stilled, and Mark Twain's mind given peace at last and his talent restored."[1] Another trend has been to see the novel as a storehouse of Twain's ideas and his "philosophy", studying it in conjunction with such non-fiction works as *What is Man?* In any case, in most of the studies and critical analyses of the novel the center of attention has been Satan (or No. 44), who is treated as Twain's mouthpiece. The narrator of the novel has so far remained on the periphery of criticism, though it is he who holds the greatest dramatic potential. This paper attempts to

analyze *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* from the point of view of the young narrator.

The novel revolves around a sixteen year old boy and his journey from ignorance to self-realization under the influence and guidance of a mysterious and inscrutable character who calls himself No. 44, New Series 864, 962. During the course of the journey, August, the narrator, is forced to confront himself on the one hand, and to reassess the notions and attitudes that he has acquired from his social environment, on the other. He finds out that the questions of faith, of man's place in the universe, the problems of inter-personal relationships and the relationship between individual and society are not as simple as he has so far believed, and the issues involved just cannot be taken for granted. He also has to grapple with such ideas as Time and Death. The effect of all this is to make him lose his faith in life and he turns cynical.

August grows up in a small, picture-postcard town, complete with woodsy hills, a tranquil river, "its surface painted with cloud-forms and the reflections of drifting arks and stone-boats,"[2] small homesteads that "nested among orchards and shade-trees," and a castle. Apparently, it is a picture of beauty and bliss, a dreamland. But appearances are deceptive. The soft-hued exterior hides a harsh reality.

The bliss of Eseldorf is the bliss of ignorance. In the 15th C. Austria, time seems to be at a stand-still: "Austria was far away from the world and asleep; it

was still the Middle Ages in Austria, and promised to remain so far ever" (221). An institutionalized Church, obscurantist and dogmatic to the core, ensures that this ignorance is perpetuated in order to protect the interests of the Church-Monarchy nexus.

> Eseldorf was a paradise for us boys. We were not over much pestered with schooling. Mainly we were trained to be good Catholics; to reserve the Virgin, the Church and the saints above everything; to hold the Monarch in awful reverence, speak of him with bated breath, uncover before his picture, regard him as the gracious provider of our daily bread and of all our earthy blessings, and ourselves as being sent into the world with one only mission, to labor for him, bleed for him, die for him when necessary. Beyond these matters we were not required to know much and in fact, not allowed to. The priests said that knowledge was not good for the common people, and could make them discontented with the lot which God had appointed for them, and God would not endure discontentment with his plans. This was true, for the priests got it of the Bishop. (222)

This is the classic image of a class-based society where religion serves the interests of the ruling class and acts as the opium of the masses.

The Church, aided and abetted by the state machinery, rigidly controls all aspects of life, personal as well as social, and does not allow any room for the development of the spirit of enquiry in order to maintain the status quo. The control of the Church over the minds of the people is so complete that even a person like Father Adolf, a narrow-minded, scheming,

vulgar, profane drunkard is held in awful reverence even though the people are aware of his gross character simply because he is a representative of the Church. He successfully dabbles in the village politics, so much that "he belonged to the village council, and lorded it there, and played smart dodges that carried his projects through" (223).

It is in such a social atmosphere that August grows up. We do not get to know much about his class background, his family life or his early experience, but from the fact that he joins the print shop as an apprentice, it may be deduced that he belongs to one of the lower social classes. His timidity and his tendency of not mingling freely with others in the castle suggest a difficult childhood. But one thing is certain: he has grown up as a part of his society and shares its attitudes and prejudices. He is not a rebel. There is nothing to suggest at this stage that he is at odds with society or that he feels cramped or suffocated in any way. On the contrary, the fact that he is a product of society and shares its outlook is emphasized. In the very first paragraph of the novel, after mentioning that many people believed that it was still the Age of Faith in Austria, he goes on the add, "But they meant it as a compliment, not a slur, and it was so taken, and we were all proud of it. I remember it well although I was only a boy; and I remember, too, the pleasure it gave me" (221). Similarly, when he narrates the story of how Satan built a bridge in one night and how he was then

cheated out of his wages by the priests, he is at pains to underline the fact that he believes the story to be nothing but authentic history.

But inspite of being one with his environment in terms of perception and outlook, August is gifted with a sensitive mind, a keen observation and a basically sympathetic and sound heart. His description of Father Adolf's personality and behavior are a testimony to the keenness of his observation. "It was in conducting funerals that Father Adolf was at his best, if he hadn't too much of a load on, but about enough to make him properly appreciate the sacredness of his office" (225). Statements like this one cannot be dismissed as adult hindsight, for apart from one or two exceptions, there is no allusion to the fact that he is narrating the story as a grown-up man; throughout the novel, the point of view that is maintained is that of a sixteen-year-old boy.

When the action of the novel begins, August has left the village and moved to a castle to become an apprentice in the print shop located there. With this change in his physical environment August becomes a part of a learned profession, though one in its infancy in the late 15th C. Austria. He has, it would seem, left the ignorance and stagnation of Eseldorf behind and become a part of an establishment that is the harbinger of enlightenment and progress. The change is significant: "Very few persons in our secluded region had ever seen a printed page, few had any very clear

idea about the art of printing, and perhaps still fewer had any curiosity concerning it or felt any interest in it" (228-30). Appropriately enough, the Church is suspicious of the profession, and frowns upon it. The work of printing has to be conducted in secrecy on account of the Church: "The Church was opposed to the cheapening of books and the indiscriminate dissemination of knowledge" (230). But the difference between the village and the castle is only a superficial one, and August is "more curiously than pleasantly situated" there (229). The castle itself is "mouldering to ruin." It has remained uninhabited for as much as a century, the line that owned it being extinct. The contrast between the atmosphere of the castle that is evoked throughout the novel and the profession of printing is striking. It is hardly the place for the conduct of an activity associated with the newly developing sciences and the dissemination of knowledge. The dark and damp atmosphere of the castle, terrifying and oppressive, that overwhelms and obliterates the promise of light and enlightenment, for the tiny establishment of the print shop "was lost in it, like a swallow's nest in a cliff" (229). So when August moves to the castle, he moves to a dead past and not to a place associated with knowledge and progress.

As the scene shifts from the village to the castle, isolation becomes deeper. The life in the castle is completely secluded and there is a minimum of contact

with the village or the outside world. The isolation that characterizes castle life is even more acute in the case of August since he is alienated even from the castle society. In the chapters succeeding the first he remains a mere passive observer. Throughout these chapters he behaves like an objective and uninvolved commentator. He describes the other characters, their personalities, their attitudes and behavior in a way that is sharp and exact, he comments upon the action, but he keeps himself aloof from others and does not participate in the action or play any role in the affairs of the castle. He always maintains a certain distance from it all. For example, when 44 appears on the scene August describes the reactions of the whole company in great detail, of those who turn instinctively against 44 as well as those who are instinctively on his side, but he never says a single word about his own opinion of him. Isolation and alienation go on deepening as we move from the outside world to the self: Austria is isolated from the world, Eseldorf is isolated from the rest of Austria, the castle is isolated from the village and August is isolated from life in the castle.

Although he is alienated from his environment, August remains a keen and sensitive observer and despite his lack of involvement, his basically sound and sympathetic heart asserts itself in his descriptions. August's sympathies are always with the unfortunate sufferers, yet he always remains a silent spectator. Though gifted with a sound and sympathetic heart and a sensitive mind, August lacks

courage. His lack of involvement emanates from a sense of insecurity and betrays an overpowering concern for self-preservation. Even when his heart and mind revolt against something, he goes along with the majority in order to avoid attracting attention and comment and to ward off any possible threat to the self. So when the magician, Balthasar, gulls the company into believing that the astonishing feats performed by 44 are actually a result of Balthasar using him as a tool for his magic, everybody is filled with wonder and adoration, and after a particularly extraordinary performance by 44, everybody starts paying homage to the magician. August observes: "They actually went on their knees to the magician, Frua Stein leading, the rest following. I know, for I was there and saw it. I was amazed at such degraded idolatry and hypocrisy—-at least servility—- but I knelt, too to avert remark" (246). Obviously, even at such an early stage in his life, August has learned that to be a part of the herd guarantees safety and well-being.

August betrays a duality of personality. His detachment and alienation from the environment are a result of a conflict between opposing feelings. The instincts of a basically sound heart do not allow him to become one with his social environment but his deep-seated sense of insecurity forbids him from acting upon the promptings of his pure heart. So he turns inward and becomes withdrawn. He can admire the strength of character of Katrina and the don't-give-a-

damn attitude of Doangivadam, but he cannot emulate them. Even 44, despite all his influence over him, cannot change the personality of August, cannot give him confidence and self-assurance enough to make him act upon his instincts. Till the end of the novel August remains a weak character, torn between positive instincts and negative social conditioning. If anything, the influence of 44 acts in the direction of deepening this schism. Through 44, August becomes all the more acutely conscious of the basically evil nature of the human race and the insignificance of man, on the one hand, and on the other, he is lead to self-awareness and to a realization of his own hidden potentialities. As the identity crisis becomes more acute, August becomes completely isolated, so much so that he comes to reject life itself. After 44's "funeral" which takes place exactly half way through the novel, there is no reference to the affairs of the castle except in the episode dealing with 44's "reincarnation" and some fleeing glimpses of castle life in the context of August's love affair with Marget. In the second half of the novel it is almost exclusively August and 44, or August and his Duplicate, closeted together and discussing the human race or some other related subject. The development in August's understanding of the human race on the one hand and the growth in his self-awareness on the other weaken his relationship with society.

The first sign of change in August under the influence of 44 is a heightening of his sensitivity; he starts feeling more deeply as relationship with 44 becomes more intimate. Before the growth of their relationship, August shows little emotional involvement with the affairs of the castle and remains a mere observer even when his sympathies are with the underdog. But a remarkable change takes place when August comes closer to 44 and becomes intimate with him. His descriptions of the plight of 44 become emotionally charged and he starts feeling deeply for his friend. His understanding of human nature becomes sharp. He is brought face to face with extremes of cruelty, malice, hatred, viciousness and meanness as he witnesses 44 being relentlessly pursued and tortured by all except a few inmates of the castle. They redouble their efforts in this direction when the master raises him to the rank of apprentice. What makes these expressions of hatred, malice and cruelty more striking is that 44 does nothing to instigate them. He even remains oblivious of the enmity of which he is the target. This lack of concern on the part of 44 makes the display of human nature stand out in bold relief and August cannot help noticing it.

Apart from providing indirect glimpses of human nature, 44 also takes August along to the scene of the burning of an old woman accused of being a witch. In *No 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, such "conducted tours" are not as common as they are in

The Mysterious Stranger (or "The Chronicle of Young Satan", to call it by its original name), but the effect is as profound as anything in the earlier version of the story, and August is deeply moved by the experience. The scene is highly pathetic. The old and fragile woman is chained to the stake, faggots are piled around her and finally fire is applied. She remains oblivious of the whole operation, extreme exhaustion reducing her to a state of semi-consciousness. As flames rise to engulf her, August observes, "During more than a minute that strange and impressive absence of motion and movement continued, then it was broken in a way to make any being with a heart in his breast shudder - a man lifted his little child and sat her upon his shoulder, that she might see the better!" (327). August finds it impossible to remain an uninvolved onlooker. He tries to persuade 44 to save the old woman, and but for 44 telling him that the whole thing is preordained, he would have tried to do so himself. These are all very powerful experiences for the young August.

Yet man and the human race are not wholly evil. If 44 makes August confront the evil inherent in man, he also makes him experience the goodness that is as much a part of human nature. The master defies Frau Stein on 44's behalf, a thing he does not do even for his own sister whom he loves dearly. And when the printers go on strike against raising 44 to the rank of apprentice, he would rather be ruined than betray 44. She takes up cudgels against the combined strength of

Frua Stein and the printers on his behalf. Somehow, 44 seems to possess the knack of bringing out the best as well as the worst in people, depending upon whether they are basically good or evil.

But the problem of good and evil is more complex than good individuals vs. evil ones since within the individual elements of good and evil are intermingled. What decides the nature of a person is which of the two elements has precedence in his or her personality. Forty-four himself acknowledges the presence of both good and evil in the human race when he tells August that he will show him something creditable as well as something discreditable for his race. Then, before taking August to the scene of the burning of the old woman, he takes him to a house where four women have remained unmarried and become old maids for the sake of their brother who became an invalid while trying to save the life of Father Adolf and has spent what once promised to be the best years of his life in bed as a paralytic. The scene is full of pathos and August is deeply touched as he looks at this example of the deepest of misery and suffering as well as selfless sacrifice and devotion. As they are returning to the castle, August reveals, "In our flight homeward I was depressed and silent, there was a heavy weight upon my spirit...." (323).

These examples of the positive aspects of the human race do not dispel the gloom. The goodness that is part of human nature does not offset the evil; rather,

it makes the tragedy more profound. The patches of light just make the darkness stand out and appear all the more black. Observing human nature in all its variety, August cannot escape the conclusion that though man, and by extension the human race, has elements of good as well as evil, it is latter that dominate and render the good impotent. The living picture that 44 paints of the pathetic condition of Blacks in the mid-nineteenth century America leaves August misty eyed. As he listens to "Cunnel Bludso's nigger" singing of his lost home, August feels that "there was never anything so beautiful, never anything so heart-breaking, oh, never any music like it below the skies!" (356). Similarly, while discussing the message-carrying function of dream-sprites, 44 brings the past and the future together and shows August that man has always been and will always remain slave to bigotry and superstition. So the forces of evil that have held sway so far will continue to do so in the future also.

But whether good or evil, man is, finally, insignificant. Forty-four systematically undermines all of August's ideas about man and his place in the universe. August claims that man is made in the image of God and that he is His noblest creation, but 44 proves through irrefutable arguments how insignificant man is, how limited his mind is - a mind that cannot conceive of eternity; that cannot conceive of "something being made out of nothing"; a mind that

is "merely a machine", performing its task automatically, unable to "conceive of a new thing, an original thing," only capable of "gathering material from the outside" and combining "it into new forms and patterns" (332-33). When August asks 44 what he is if he is not a human being, 44 says, "Ah.... Now we have arrived at a point where words are useless; words cannot even convey human thoughts capably, and they do nothing at all with thoughts whose realm and orbit are outside the solar system, so to speak...." (318). It is language, everybody believes, that distinguishes man from animals!

What makes 44's arguments even more chilling is the fact that, unlike Satan in "The Chronicle of Young Satan," he is not trying to denigrate the human race; his intention is simply to emphasize the difference between himself and August. For him, man is a pathetic creature, more pitiable than hateful, amusing at best—more amusing, perhaps, than "a basket of monkeys" in that "monkeys, in their mental and moral freaks show not so great variety, and therefore are the less entertaining" (320).

The way 44 highlights the evil inherent in human nature, and his arguments about the insignificance of man and the limitedness of his mind have a profound effect on August. Although he puts up a brave fight for his race and protests against 44's observations about mankind, it is evident that he is

fighting a losing battle. His alienation becomes absolute and he starts brooding:

> O Young as I was – I was barely seventeen – my days were now sodden with depressions, there was little or no rebound. My interest in the affairs of the castle and of its occupants faded out and disappeared; I kept to myself and took little or no notice of the daily happenings; my Duplicate performed all my duties, and I had nothing to do but wander aimlessly about and be unhappy. (335)

Nothing is sacred to 44; he scoffs at and makes fun of ideas and images that August has long cherished and held scared. Faith, God, the dead – anything and everything can be a subject of jokes as far as 44 is concerned. He turns seemingly the most serious subjects into farce.

Encounters with death and the dead finally force August to address the ultimate question: if death is inevitable, then what is the meaning of life? When he stands witnessing the procession of the dead file past towards the end of the story, what is borne upon him is the worthlessness of all human desire, ambition, power, achievement, glory – all that man considers important and holds dear when alive. The procession is a grand assembly, "most of them had been distinguished, in their day and had cut a fine figure in the world"

> Pharaoh was there, and David and Goliah and several other of the sacred characters; and Adam and Eve, and some of the Caesars, and Cleopatra, and Charlemagne, and Dagobert, and kings, and kings, and kings till you couldn't count them – the most of

> them from away back thousands and thousands of centuries before Adam's time. Some of them fetched their crowns along, and had a rotten velvet rag or two dangling about their bones, a kind of a pathetic spectacle. (401-2)

And August had been taught to regard and revere the Monarch "as the gracious provider of our daily bread and of all earthly blessing"!(222) All the skeletons do not belong to a long dead, unfamiliar past, outside the range of August's personal experience.

> And there were skeletons whom I had known, myself, and been at their funerals, only three or four years before – men and women, boys and girls; and they put out their bony hands and shook with me; and looked so sad. Some of the skeletons dragged the rotting ruins of their coffins after them by a string, and seemed pitifully anxious that that poor property shouldn't come to harm. (402).

After an experience of this magnitude, can August be expected to retain his faith in life and its sanctity; can he remain convinced of the loftiness of human achievement, of glory and fame? Forty-four destroys the very foundations on which rests August's identity as a member of the human race by either turning it all into a jest and laughing at it, or by exposing the pathetic worthlessness of it. But there is nothing to fill the void. Through 44, August learns that what he had always believed to be the moral center of human existence was only an illusion created by man to justify the evil inherent in his nature. It is spiritual blindness induced by ignorance and alienation, and purposefully perpetuated by the institutions erected by

the powerful that makes these illusions possible. Forty-four rids August of the illusions but he does not offer a moral alternative. One cannot but agree with Susan K. Harris' view about the novel that "In *No 44, The Mysterious Stranger* however, the stranger does not represent a new moral order."[3]

If the external reality, or at least August's perception of it, is an illusion, then what about the self? Just as 44 forces August to reconsider his notions about man and the human race, so does he precipitate an identity crisis in him at the personal level.

Forty-four makes it possible for August to establish contact with the deepest recesses of the self by creating his Duplicate and by giving him the power to become invisible. While the Duplicate is August's Dream-Self-given-physical-form, August learns from 44 that he becomes pure Soul when invisible: "When I was invisible the whole of my physical make-up was gone, nothing connected with it or depending upon it was left. My soul – my immortal spirit –alone remained. Freed from the encumbering flesh, it was able to exhibit forces, passions and emotions of a quite tremendously effective character" (243). The Duplicate, Emil Schowarz, is a part of August's self. He is like a twin brother to August in as much as they were born of the same womb at the same moment but they have remained complete strangers to each other "until 44 had put flesh upon him; we could not have met if we

had wanted to because whenever one of us was awake and in command of our common brain and nerves the other was of necessity asleep and unconscious." Even when they finally meet when the Dream-Self is given physical form, August is far from enthusiastic

> There was no heartiness; we began as mere acquaintances, and so remained. ...there was no spiritual kinship between us; spiritually we were a couple of distinctly independent and unrelated individuals, with equal rights in a common fleshly property, and we cared no more for each other than we cared for any other stranger. (343).

This element of strangeness and unfamiliarity in the relationship between August and his Duplicate is emphasized throughout the novel. Obviously, Emil is meant to be the incarnation of the deepest recesses of August's personality of whose existence he is not aware himself.

Contemplation of his Dream-Self leads to self-knowledge and August becomes aware of the vast potential of his mind. The Dream-Self is independent of time and space and is almost limitless. Stars and planets, galaxies and the heavens are but its playground; it sees "wonders, spectacles, splendour which your fleshly eyes couldn't endure", and hears "the music of the spheres—no mortal could live through five minutes of that ecstasy!" (380). Yet August finds the knowledge of little use since Waking-Self, with its limitations, cannot act upon this knowledge. As he contemplates his Dream-Self, August also

becomes aware of the vast gulf that separates his Waking-Self from Dream-Self

> I was to inspect the final detail, now—mentality. I had put it last for I was reluctant, afraid, doubtful. Of course one glance was enough—I was expecting that. It saddened me; he was of a loftier world than I, he moved in regions where I could not tread, with my earth-shod feet. I wished I had left that detail alone. (366).

Even proper and meaningful communication between the two aspects of the self is not possible. Frequently, August finds Emil speaking a language that he cannot comprehend. August becomes aware of the fact that a harmonious, meaningful relationship between his two selves is not possible. There is no common meeting ground for the two. If his Waking-Self cannot reach the loftier plane of existence of his Dream-Self, Emil, his Dream-Self-given-physical form, finds it hard to tolerate the shackles of a physical existence. He pathetically requests August to intercede with the "magician" on his behalf and get him freedom from "these bonds of flesh—this decaying vile matter, this foul weight, and clog, and burden, this loathsome sack of corruption in which my spirit is imprisoned, her white wings bruised and soiled___ oh be merciful and set her free!" To be of flesh, to have physical form itself means slavery to the illusions that man has created for himself. It is not possible to be free in physical existence.

> "Oh, this human life, this earthy life, this weary life! It is so groveling, and so mean, its ambitions are so

> paltry, its prides so trivial, its vanities so childish; and the glories that it values and applauds -lord, how empty! Oh, here I am a servant! — I who never served before; here I am a slave among little mean kings and emperors made of clothes, the kings and emperors slaves themselves, to mud-built carrion that are their slaves!" (369).

So the Waking-Self with its shackles of flesh, its earthy, weary, groveling, mean, paltry physical existence cannot achieve synthesis with the Dream-Self; the gulf that separates August from Emil cannot be bridged. As August listens to Emil's plea, he is emotionally stirred and feels a deep pity for his Duplicate. But just when the possibility of the establishment of an emotional link between the two selves emerges, the whole thing degenerates into farce:

> He could not speak, for emotion; for the same cause my voice forsook me; and so, in silence we grasped hands again; and that grip, strong and warm, said for us what our tongues could not utter. At that moment the cat entered, and stood looking at us. Under her grave gaze a shamefaced discomfort, a sense of embarrassment, began to steal over me, just as would have been the case if she had been a human being who had caught me in that gushy and sentimental situation, and I felt myself blushing.... With an uncomfortable feeling of being critically watched by the cat, I pressed him with clumsy courtesy into his seat again, and slumped into my own. (370-71).

The Dream-Self occupies the same position in relation to the Soul that the Waking-Self occupies in relation to the Dream-Self. August learns that just as his Dream-Self is far superior to his Waking-Self, his

Soul cannot be approached by his Dream-Self: "But my Soul, stripped of its vulgar flesh –what was my Duplicate in competition with that? Nothing, and less than nothing. The conditions were reversed, as regarded passions, emotions, sensations, and arts and graces of persuasion" (344). The difference is not just quantitative, but qualitative, for while the Waking-Self and the Dream-Self are mortal, the Soul is immortal: "This last is immortal, the others are functioned by the brain and the nerves and are physical and mortal...." (342). The Dream-Self, appropriately enough, is not even aware of the Soul. So Emil cannot see August when he becomes invisible.

Not only must the Waking-Self, the Dream-Self and the Soul remain separated, beyond one another's reach, they must also remain hostile to one another. If, as we have seen, Emil gives him cause for admiration, he also becomes a target of August's hatred. Many a time, when he suddenly chances upon Emil, August is startled. It irritates him, and he is displeased with Emil. Displeasure takes the form of hatred when Emil falls to making love with Marget and she starts responding. Whenever August finds Emil and Marget making love his hatred for Dream-Self is intensified, and he uses such epithets for him as "Dream-mush", "reptile" and "bullfrog" (345). Just as in admiring Emil August admires himself, so also he actually hates a part of his own self when he hates his Duplicate.[4] So a complex love-hate relationship

develops between the Waking-Self and the Dream-Self of August. The same conflicts and contradictions that mark the relationship between the Waking-Self and the Dream-Self also exist between the Dream-Self and the Soul. Marget is the object of the passions of all the three selves of August, and while August is jealous of his Duplicate, Emil exhibits the same tendencies towards the Soul and vice-versa.

So the Waking-Self, the Dream-Self and the Soul cannot coexist harmoniously as one entity – they must remain hostile to one another. August learns that the self of which he has been aware so far is an illusion. The self as a unified coherent entity is a myth created by man to preserve the illusion of his dignity and nobility. Again, when the illusion is shattered, there is nothing left to fill the void. August has discovered the vast potential of the self, but he has also discovered the fact that the potential must remain just that – it cannot be realized. He can never be at peace with himself, just as he cannot be at peace with his environment. The self must remain divided, at war with itself. Nor can August take refuge in the warmth of inter-personal relationships. One fallout of the conflict in the self is that it renders genuine, authentic relationship with another individual impossible. August says of his relationship with Marget, "And now a sorrowful thought came to me: all three of my selves were in love with the one girl, and how could we all be happy? It made me miserable to think of it, the

situation was so involved in difficulties, perplexities and unavoidable heart burning and resentments" (343). The situation is hopeless, indeed, if even love leads to misery.

By the time August reaches the culmination of his journey, all hope has been destroyed. He has learned that there is no hope for the human race. Insignificant and inconsequential as it is, it must remain dominated by ignorance and evil, beset with greed, malice, cruelty and false pride, floundering and blind, slave to the illusions it has created for itself. What 44 observes about the human race is true—it is more to be pitied than despised. Neither is there any hope for the individual members of the human race. Though the self has great potential, it lacks the ability to convert this potential into reality because of the inner contradictions and conflicts. It is not possible for the self to achieve synthesis. Even love and true genuine human relationships are a mirage. August has reached a dead end. From here he cannot go anywhere except to the depths of despair and to a negation of life itself.

In order to appreciate fully the implications of August's journey we must now address the question: who is 44? What is the source of August's knowledge and despair? While considering this question, it is worthwhile to bear in mind that 44 does nothing, teaches nothing completely new to August. He only increases August's isolation and alienation from his environment, for when 44 appears on the scene,

August is already isolated; he only sharpens August's perception that is already ironical; he only heightens August's awareness of the conflicts in the self, for August already shows duality of character. And hence, when finally 44 tells him that life is no more than a dream, August exclaims, "It was electrical! By God I had had that very thought a thousand times in my musings!" (404). It is in this sense, at least, that 44 is an extension of August himself. Just as Emil is his Dream-Self-given-physical form, so is 44 an incarnation of August's creative imagination. As he says himself, "I myself have no existence, I am but a dream ____ your dream, creature of your imagination" (404). This bringing together of dream and imagination is significant for it reminds us that 44 and Emil have many characteristics in common. Dream-Self and creative imagination, they both are independent of time and space; past present and future, the divisions of time have no meaning for them; they can travel to the extremities of the universe and beyond in the twinkling of the eye. They both appear to be fickle in nature, skipping from one subject to the other seemingly without rhyme or reason, yet they have a reason of their own. They both appear to be illogical from a purely rational standpoint, yet they have a logic of their own. And 44, as he proves to August, has unlimited powers—he can create anything out of nothing, bring time to a stand-still or make it run backwards, perform miracles of any nature, conjure

up the ages dead and unborn is such a way that they become as real and vivid as the present. So like the Waking-Self, the Dream-Self and the Soul, 44, the creative imagination, represents the fourth dimension of August's self.

Where does this leave us? The implications are "appalling" for August, for if 44 is an extension of his self, then the source of his knowledge and understanding lies within him. His isolation is profound - even 44 does not represent a link with any reality outside the self. Beyond the self there is nothing – a total void. And what self? A divided self at war with itself, without substance or meaning. It is in this context that 44's final assertion has meaning:

> "It is true, that which I have revealed to you: there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all Dream, a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but You. And You are but a Thought wandering forlorn among the empty eternities!" (405).

Is there no hope then, no escape from this dark vision? Sholom J. Kahn sees "a world of hope" in 44's injunction – "Dream other dreams, and better,"[5] but can the divided self with its conflicts and contradictions dream better dreams? The prospect, instead of providing hope, fills August with despair ("He vanished and left me appalled; for I knew, and realized, that all he had said was true" 405), for it places all the responsibility squarely upon his shoulders – a responsibility he cannot discharge because of the

limitations of the self. Moreover, the injunction implies that life, even at its best, must only remain a dream. Forty-four tells August: "But I, your poor servant, have revealed you to yourself and set you free" (404). Free of illusions of the external reality and the self, yes, but there is nothing to take their place. As Susan K. Harris has put it, "In *No. 44, the Mysterious Stranger*... the search for a landscape of salvation presents a ... serious problem for August because by the end of his story there is no material left from which he can construct an alternative to the corrupt historical world that he finally learns is an illusion."[6] Freedom is as much an illusion as everything else in the novel.

But hope there is. If all is a dream, if nothing exists except a divided self at war with itself, what is August (and by extension, Twain) doing narrating the story? For the narration of a story assumes an audience. It is in the assumed audience that there lies hope.

Department of English,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh.

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2. William M. Gibson (ed.), *Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* (California: University of California Press, 1969), p.221. All further references are to this edition and are given as page numbers in parentheses within the text.
3. Susan K. Harris, *Mark Twain's Escape from Time: A Study of Patterns and Images* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), p.35-36.
4. J. D. Stahl believes that the revulsion that August feels as he watches Emil embracing Marget is directed against "the coarse physicality of sexual desire" (J.D. Stahl, *Mark Twain, Culture and Gender: Envisioning America Through Europe* [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994], 168),but I think that the revulsion is more general and is an expression of self-hatred in as much as it is directed against his Duplicate. The fact that August feels no such revulsion when he himself, or his soul, makes love to Marget (on the contrary,

these moments are the most blissful experience of his life) vindicates my view.

5. Sholom J. Kahn, *Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger: A Study of Manuscript Texts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978) 185.

6. Susan K. Harris, *op.cit.*, p.35.

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Seemin Hasan

The True, the Blushful: A Feminist Reclamation of Fanny Brawne

The dynamics of the Keats – Fanny romance when re-assessed, using ideologies of gender, illuminate crucial contexts ignored by conservative criticism. The intersecting philosophies of second-generation feminists like Luce Irigaray and Michelle Le Doeuff and psycho-analyst-feminist, Julia Kristeva ,evoke new meanings and new interpretations.

Luce Irigaray defines a specifically feminine perspective that subverts the hegemony of patriarchy that condemns women to silence as women. 'Women lack mediation for the work of sublimation.'[1] she claims. Men, according to her, objectify themselves and also objectify women. She maintains that, like Marx's proletariat, the patriarchy keeps women 'in' society but not 'of' society. She highlights the repressed areas of the female psyche, which the patriarchy deemed to be outside civilized boundaries. 'Civilized', in patriarchal terms, refers fundamentally to the masculine. Irigaray deconstructs Freud and subverts concepts such as the ego and the Oedipus complex. 'Women's ego... is largely "unconscious" and subject to the "conscience" of fathers...which functions as their super-ego.'[2] In her own descriptions of women, she uses images of intangibility and emptiness.

Michelle Le Doeuff furthers Irigaray's argument by claiming that reason and rationality are not essentially patriarchal. 'What is the point ...in going over and over an outdated question and talking about what happened the day before yesterday?' [3] Le Doeuff protests that women have often been positioned as devotees and disciples of great men rather than as independent entities. The study of the hidden face opens up new terrains. The alienated woman ceases to be a devotee and begins to speak in her own voice.

Both Irigaray and Le Doeuff have been linked with Julia Kristeva who is known for having analyzed the unanalyzable. Kristeva believes in subjective and artistic experiences that provide deeper understanding of life. Concern for the unconscious is visible in Kristeva's studies of melancholy, depression and love. She theorizes that identity formation depends on the successful separation of the child from its mother. If harmony is not achieved in this process, melancholy tears it apart. Love, in such a context, becomes a blind impulse on the road to destruction. Kristeva says'... the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin; melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue.'[4]

The artistic space identified by these critics leads beyond earlier ramifications. The new metaphors and paradigms serve to resolve misunderstandings and conflicts and result in reconceptualization and reassessment.

John Keats's love affair with Fanny Brawne lasted barely three and a half years. The poet met her in September 1818. Three and a half years later, he died in February 1821. Fanny Brawne died in 1865. She outlived the poet by forty-four years. In 1872, Fanny's son, Herbert Lendon, handed over her treasure of more than three dozen letters of Keats to the highest bidder at Sotheby's. Some of the letters were chronicles of undying devotion, whereas, others ranged from hurriedly scribbled love-notes to lengthy, jealous proclivities and accusations. The publication of these letters added new dimensions to criticism. Immediate reaction maligned Fanny:

> Did Fanny Brawne care for the poetry of John Keats? She is dead and cannot answer and I have no right to answer for her, but my opinion is that she did not until it had outlived the obloquy which Grifford and Wilson and the scorpion Lockhart, had cast upon it. Look at her silhouette, which fronts the letters, and say if the cold, hard, haughty young woman who stood for that, could love poetry! The influence of Miss Fanny Brawne was the most unfortunate one to which Keats was ever subjected.[5]

So wrote R.H. Stoddard in April 1878, on the publication of Keats's love letters to Fanny Brawne. Thus began the legacy of accusation and condemnation for Fanny Brawne. She was judged to be vain, selfish, self-centered and immoral. The outrage continued until 1937, when the Oxford University Press published letters written by Fanny to Keats's sister. These letters

revealed an entirely different kind of person. Fanny's letters exhibited her as mature, kind and very much in love with Keats. However, critical assessment continued to be shallow and indifferent, mainly because neither Keats's letters nor his poems addressed to Fanny Brawne caught the attention of the major critics.

John Keats met Fanny Brawne in September 1818. His brother George, along with his wife Georgiana, had left England in the summer of the same year. In a letter to them, Keats wrote:

> Shall I give you Miss Brawne? She is about my height with a fine style of countenance of the lengthened sort-she wants sentiment in every feature-she manages to make her hair look well- her nostrils are fine though a little painful-her mouth is bad and good-her profile is better than her full-face which indeed in not full but pale and thin without showing any bone-her shape is very graceful and so are her movements- Her arms are good, her hands badish-her feet tolerable...She is not seventeen-but she is ignorant-monstrous in her behaviour flying out in all directions, calling people such names that I was forced lately to make use of the term Minx-this I think not from any innate vice but from a penchant she has for acting stylishly. I am however tired of such style and shall decline any more of it.[6]

The above description of Fanny Brawne is rendered in strictly representational and formal terms. The economy of romantic and erotic vocabulary belies the all-consuming quality of the attraction Keats felt for her. The resistance evokes the anxieties,

contradictions and psychic tussles in which the poet appeared to be chronically embroiled.

Critics like W.J.Bate[7] and Stuart Sperry[8], project the view that Keats's letters are written as a kind of preparatory exercise for the aesthetic constructs that he later formulated in poetry. Susan Wolfson describes the 'interrogative spirit'[9] through which Keats airs his ideas in his letters, in order to clarify and qualify them. Greg Kucich writes:

> The exact configuration of such 'events' bears many important resemblances to a specific pattern of conflict, visionary insight, and qualification that controls much of the finest poetry written during the Romantic era.[10]

Keats's letters acted as stimulants to his poetry. They served to unleash the energy needed for the creation of poetry. Prior to the production of a poem, Keats often underwent severe mental agony. This was resolved only through intense correspondence. Once the composition commenced, there was a marked deterioration in correspondence.

On September 21, 1818, just a few days after meeting Fanny Brawne, Keats set about an unusual task. He translated a sonnet by Ronsard and mailed copies of the translation to Dilke (c.21st September 1818) and to Reynolds (c.22nd September 1818). In the same letter to Reynolds, Keats wrote 'I never was in love-yet the voice and the shape of a woman has haunted me these two days'. The translated sonnet did

not depend on the original. In fact, Keats wrote independently, in the grip of a dizzying poetic energy. The transcendental birth of Cassandra, after having been beautified with the 'cream of Beauty's fairest dyes', bewitched a poet many millennia later:

> When from the heavens I saw her first descend,
> My heart took fire, and only burning pains...
> They were my pleasures-they my life's sad end;
> Love poured her beauty into my warm veins..."
>
> Translated from Ronsard (ll. 9-12)

Abiding by traditions of memory and mythology, the poet finds love descending on his empty and pristine self like a *felix culpa* (an end that serves as a new beginning) that promises new knowledge.

The female presence in Keats's poetry of 1817-18 is serene, docile, maidenly and undemanding. The entity is imitative and illustrative of patriarchal norms. She is part of the 'leafy luxury' ('To Leigh Hunt Esq.' l13) and is depicted as shy and passive:

> Were I in such a place, I should pray
> That naught less sweet might call my thoughts away,
> That the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
> Fanning against the sorrel as she goes.
> How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught.
> Playing in all her innocence of thought.
>
> ('I Stood Tip-Toe' , ll 93 -98)

The imaginative panorama adheres to Keats's classification of women 'with roses and sweetmeats'. (letter to Charles Brown, c. (?) August, 1820).

Dickstein claims '...erotic activity in [Keats's] early poems shades off into harmless and innocent play, such as biting the white shoulders of nymphs.'[12]

The pace of Keats's poetry changed after he met Fanny Brawne. After the death of his brother Tom on December 1, 1818, Keats moved in with Charles Brown at Wentworth Place. The Brawnes lived at Elm cottage, a short distance away. On Christmas Day, 1818, Keats and Fanny Brawne arrived at an 'understanding.'[13]

The year 1819 has frequently been described as the great year of Keats's poetry. Fanny's entry into Keats's life ousted his germinal coy, muse forever. Kristeva maintains that a love-relationship is secondary only to the childhood in the formation of identity. The new, ameliorative, association furnished the poet with new intensity and new insights. In the process, he began to fear for his own gendered identity. The female muse, so far, had dispersed her characteristics in nine reincarnations. Fanny, however, dealt him a single, full blow. He found himself caught in a whirl of enthrallment and high romance. The mood is captured in the medieval romances produced at this time viz. 'Isabella', 'The Eve of St. Agnes', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', and 'Lamia'. They are tales of lovers of long ago, set in the beautiful Renaissance Florence, in the ancient Corinth, in a feudal castle and in the fecund and enchanted fairy world of snow-white horses and romantic knights, where true lovers achieve an eternity of bliss and the false suffer alienation and ever death.

'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'Lamia' also project the poet's desire to suppress the female in her demonic form. Irigaray believes that evil women '...

were constituted and defined within the patriarchal order of language' and that they lived permanently under 'a death sentence.'[14]The control and subservience of a female character in literature can be read as an assertion of male authority. Critics have listed a cluster of sexually connotative terms for the two demonic women – 'enthrall', 'entrammel', 'ensnare'- which convey sympathy for the two captured heroes viz. the knight ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci') and Lycius ('Lamia'). The Belle Dame is not only an enchantress but also a very cruel one. Her powers are adversarial to the male. The 'woebegone' knight can neither understand nor change the situation. The 'wither'd sedge' and silence of the birds indicate a barren environment. According to Marjorie Levinson, 'Simultaneously pallid and blushing, moist and feverish, anxious and languid, ...Keats's knight is a figure of psychic, social and physiological contradiction.'[15]

'Lamia' is set in Corinth. Lamia is the urban version of the elfin-queen. She distracts Lycius from his masculine pursuits of truth and knowledge and traps him in a luxurious, erotic idyll. She encourages passivity in her mate and finally quails before the challenge of the philosopher Apollonius. Not the surfeit of love, but Lycius's desire to provoke the envy of his neighbours brings about the end of Lamia.

The same motivations are seen at work in the poems addressed to or inspired by Fanny Brawne.

Keats sometimes becomes her votary and sometimes her 'thrall'. At a stage, he confided, '...the very first week I knew you, I wrote myself your vassal'. (Letter, c. 25 July 1819).

The sonnet, 'As Hermes Once Took to His Feathers Light' describes a love dream associated with Fanny. Keats's draft appears in Inferno I of the copy of Cary's Dante which he presented to her. In the journal letter of 14 February–3 May 1819, Keats describes his actual dream:

> The dream was one of the most delightful enjoyments I ever had in my life- I floated as it is described, with a beautiful face to whose lips mine were joined as it seem'd for an age – and in the midst of all this cold and darkness I was warm-even flowery tree tops sprung up and we rested on them sometimes with the lightness of a cloud till the wind blew us away again - I tried a Sonnet upon it - there are fourteen lines but nothing of what I felt in it - O, that I could dream it every night-

At this stage, Keats's love for Fanny retreats into the dream mode. The dream or imaginative mode is an important Romantic aesthetic. The erotics of contemplation are listed as superior to actual possession. The possession in the dream mode and retreat in the poetic mode is treated as evidence of masculine survival by the patriarchs. Madeline, in 'The Eve of St. Agnes', functions on the same principle because she is, like Cynthia and Isabella, a dormant, docile and mute creation.

In the sonnet, Keats anticipates the pallor of the knight of 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci':

> Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
> Pale were the lips I kissed...
> ('As Hermes once Took To His Feathers Light',ll 12-13)

Keats's anxious self-consciousness regarding association with the 'other' posing as a threat to his masculine identity, is the natural consequences of the social indoctrination of the times. Thus, Keats's women, at this point, represent both the joy of creativity and the fear of its possible loss.

The attraction-repulsion pattern is outlined in a poem entitled 'To Fanny' :

> What can I do to drive away
> Remembrance from my eyes? For they have seen,
> Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen!
> Touch has a memory-Oh say, love, say,
> What can I do to kill it and be free
> In my old liberty?
>
> (ll.1-6)

The 'enthrallment' could not be repulsed because Fanny was not a poetic contrivance. She could not, like his heroines, be dehumanized into spiritual objects. The inextricable possession that love took of the poet is visible in his letter of October 13, 1819, addressed to Fanny-

> My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you ... you have absorb'd me ... I could be martyr'd for my Religion - Love is my religion - ... I could die for you ... you have ravish'd me away by a power I cannot resist ... I cannot breathe without you.

The task before the poet, now, was to repair the schism between his heart and mind. Keats needed to transcend his fear of women as the mark of his own creative limitations. Romanticism was primarily a male phenomenon. Romantics defined women through the male understanding. When the male did not have the necessary understanding; he redefined her identity to fit the established stereotypes. The androcentric approach stops with the male vision.

In the odes of May 1819, *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion* and 'Ode to Autumn', Keats works out a salvation. The female persona is now identified as both primordial and transcendent. The poet realizes that in his imaginative recreation of the world, he must take into account the feminine principle. By necessity, the female must be more than simply the object of love. Rather than emasculating the male, the female muse now becomes the embodiment of compassion. She becomes the inspiration that, when levered by the poet's imagination ,results in poetry with a vision.

The female, as a compassionate entity, is identified in 'Ode to a Nightingale' where she transports him into a world that has 'never known/ the weariness, the fever and fret' (l.22) of mortality. The 'demon Poesy' of 'Ode on Indolence' is described as 'maiden most unmeek' (ll. 30,29). The Grecian urn, the 'bride of quietness' (l. 1) encapsulates supreme happiness. 'Ode to Autumn' presents the recognition of truth. The fever of sexual energy is now replaced by the quiet consolation of wisdom and compassion. The

feminine power is no longer threatening. There is, instead, a sequence of serene images where the female entity reclines '... careless on the granary floor/ ... hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind.' (ll. 14-15).

Moneta is the epitome of the female entity in Keats's poetry. She comes as a

> ... small warm rain [that]
> Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
> And fills the air with so much pleasant health
> That even the dying man forgets his shroud.
>
> (*The Fall of Hyperion*, ll. 98-101)

Moneta admonishes the dreamer and tells him that poetry can serve as a healing agent. She transforms the dreamer's identity into a poet's. Moneta has been created from the perceived inadequacies of all earlier feminine representations and hence her understanding encompasses the full realm of knowledge.

The humanizing power of Fanny's love transformed the young and naïve poet of 'Imitation of Spencer', which, as is clear by the title, was simply an attempt at the duplication of the work of a male icon, into a poet with depth and insight.

Fanny served as the index by which the poet could gauge his own identity. She assisted in the complete growth of his imagination and his poetic self. She created in him the need to love and be loved Keats wrote to her (letter c. 25 July 1819) –

> I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your loveliness and the hour of my death. O, that I could have possession of them both in the same minute...

Keats sailed to Naples in September 1820. He had no hopes of returning home. In one of the last letters to Charles Brown (c.1st Nov. 1820) he wrote -

> I am afraid to write to her - to receive a letter from her - to see her handwriting would break my heart ... for my sake, be her advocate forever. ... I should like her to know that I do not forget her ...

As a last wish, the poet asked for a lock of Fanny's hair to be put into his coffin.

On receiving the news of Keats's death, Fanny spent many long nights reading Keats's love letters. Later, in the spring, she wrote to Keats's sister 'I have not got over it and never shall '...[16]

In the short span of three years, the Keats-Fanny romance achieved heightened maturity. The feminist reading establishes the identity of Fanny Brawne as crucial to the exegesis of Keats's poetry. The association with Fanny is found to cohere, rather than alienate the poet from his creativity.

The passion, that once made the act of creativity frightening and painful to Keats, is now replaced by compassion. The poet's pain had been created by his own masculinity. Fanny, freed from solipsistic androgyny, can now become his counterpart. Thus, by reconciling his divided self; she also reintegrates his fractured muse.

Department of English,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh.

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Rahatullah Khan

W.H. Davies' Nature Poetry : A Reappraisal

Call me a Nature Poet, nothing more,
Who writes of simple things, not human evil
W.H. Davies

William Henry Davies (1871-1940) like Walter de la Mare, is an eminent Georgian poet who found place in all the five volumes of the *Georgian-Poetry(1911-22)* edited by Edward Marsh. These Georgians "took traditional pastoral motives, romantic accounts of the East, nature subjects, meditative description of English scenery, or accounts in a subdued lyrical strain of personal experiences in listening to birds or watching the sunset..."[1] Since most of these poets were town dwellers visiting the countryside on weekend holidays, nature in their poetry is not "red in tooth and claw" nor do they write about their experiences of her sublime aspects.

Davies, "the super tramp" or "a jolly tramp" as he preferred to call himself, was brought up by his grandfather, an old sailor who "had no interest in any thing except the weather and his chief conversation was the doings of the sea."[2] He thus inherited a love for the roving life of a sailor in general and for the outdoor life in particular.

This led him to tramping at an early stage in his life. During this period his pilgrimage had been both on the shores of England and across the Atlantic. It

was also during this pilgrimage that Davies' contact with nature, both animate and inanimate, was further intensified. He often begged his way by working as a herdsman looking after cattle, as picker of fruits or as a labourer on farms. He continued this habit of tramping despite his "one bad leg" and felt sorry for his "sweet stay and home" when he had not seen much of nature and the countryside.

Davies' love of tramping provided him many opportunities of direct and close contact with nature. He, therefore, wrote about her from his first-hand experience like the Romantics. This fact also made his treatment of nature distinctively different from his contemporary poets, the Georgians, who were mostly casual observers of the beauties of nature. He himself confesses, "My mind was so full of nature that I did not trouble about human nature"[3] and that "My love for nature was terrific. Even Wordsworth couldn't have felt as I did."[4]

What impressed Davies most in nature were her "beauty", "peace" and "ease". He is basically a lover of beauty and his strongest desire is,

"To see the beauty that is in the world
Of Science, Art and Nature at all times"[5].

What characterises him most as a nature poet is his indigenous love for the sights and sounds of nature without any deeper association. He lacks the philosophical depth and the metaphysical insight of poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, "He is essentially

sensuous in his approach to nature, he describes nothing that he has not received through his senses"[6]. His communion with nature is never the mystic relationship of Wordsworth. It is instead a simple and responsive kind of relationship of the poet to the objects of nature. In fact all that matters to him is the physical beauty of these objects:

_____a life in flower
To kiss and smell and call it sweet,
A thousand year or more.

He delineates her "sweet" life, and celeberates the joy which is neither wonderful nor mysterious:

I love the earth through my two eyes,
Like any butterfly or bee
The hidden roots escapes my thoughts
I love but what I see.

His characteristic approach being through the eye but other senses too are equally active and the poet enjoys the beauty of nature with his whole being:

My senses feel the air around
There is not a move escapes my eye
My ears are cocked to ever sound.

Regarding Georgian poets' love for the beauty of their places and their attitude to nature David Daiches has made a very pertinent remark,"They tended to become regional poets each celebrating the acres of the countryside he knew and loved best. The sea, the country town, and selected rural parts of England made up the bulk of their subject-matter"[7]. Daiches further comments that "Georgian poetry was at its best when it responded, quietly meditative, to

the slow beating rustic heart of England"[8].In this regard Davies may be compared to his contemporaries like W.J. Turner, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, John Freeman, Harold Monro and Edmund Blunden, It is in these descriptions of the natural scenery of the places that the elements of 'beauty' 'peace' and 'ease' are fully expressed.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson expresses his delightful experience in his moorland in the following lines:

The sky was cloudless overhead
And just alive with larks assigning;
And in a twinkling I was swinging
Across the windy hills, light hearted.
A kestrel at my footstep started,
Just pouncing on a frightened mouse,
And hung over head with wings ahover [9]

Similarly John Drinkwater describes the 'peace' and 'quietness' of Sussex:

For peace, than knowledge more desirable,
Into your Sussex quietness I came,
When Summer's green and gold and azure fell
Over the world in flame.
And peace upon your pasture lands I found,
Where grazing flocks drift in continuously,
As a little cloud that travels with no sound
Across. windless sky.[10]

John Freeman discovers beauty in the countryside:

Beauty walked over the hills and made them bright
She in the long fresh grass scattered her rains
Sparkling and glittering like a host of stars,
But not like stars cold, severe, terrible
Hers was the laughter of the wind that leaped
Armful of shadows, flinging them far and wide
Hers the bright light within the quickening green

Of every new leaf on the oldest tree.[11]

Davies also describes the beauty and 'peace' of the countryside in a number of poems. Take for instance the following lines:

As I walk out I see the trees
Wherein the pretty squirrels sleep,
All standing in snow so deep:
And every thing, however small,
Blossomed white and beautiful.

A streak of love for the land is quite visible in the following lines:

The day the fields are rich in grass
And buttercups in thousands grow
I will show the world where I have been
With gold dust seen on either shoe.

For Davies, like Wordsworth and Keats, it is a permanent passion with the poet and a perennial source of pleasure for him. The beauty in nature continues to provide pleasure and is always a source of peace until it is transformed into poetry. He also, like Wordsworth, believes that poetry is nothing but "emotion recollected in tranquillity"[12]. Davies says,

When I beheld a Rainbow or fair cloud.
She gave my mind free copies, which would last.
When their originals were perished quite.

'When on Summer's Morn' can also be cited as a good instance in this regard. When the poet retires to sleep, he recollects a pleasant experience of summer morning which is full of birds'songs and is able to compose a song which is all his own:

And when time strikes the hour for sleep,
Back in my room alone,

My heart has many a sweet birds' song
And one that's all my own.

Thus for Davies nature is "a thing of beauty" which is "a joy forever". He becomes emotional while enjoying the beauty of nature and pays no heed to what the people would think about him. In "Meadows", he is overwhelmed by the beauty and peace in nature. He is aware that the people around him may consider his behaviour odd, yet he is completely lost in his enjoyment of the beauty and peace in the company of nature:

And I could almost kneel for joy,
To see the lovely meadows now,
Go on my knees for half a day
To kiss a handful here and there,
While babbling nonsense on the way.

His attitude to nature is further diversified in poems where Davies writes about the beauty and delight of nature with reference to seasons and weathers. Spring is the first in the cycle of seasons. It is the season of the renewal of life and increased activities both in the human and the natural world. It starts from the third week of March and continues till the last week of June. But the most important month of this season, in England, is April. From Chaucer to T.S. Eliot, almost every English poet, has written about it. Davies too, has written poems about spring in general and April in particular. In this regard mention may be made of 'Waiting', 'In May', 'Early Spring', 'The Coming of Spring' 'Thou Comest May', 'March', 'April Charms' and 'April'. In 'April Charms' Davies,

maintaining the traditional attitude of English poets, praises the beauty of nature scattered all around:

When April scatters coins of primrose gold,
Among copper leaves, among thickets old,
And singing skylarks from the meadow rise,
To twinkle like black stars in sunny skies.

In the first three stanzas of the poem the poet talks about the physical charms around him in the month of April he appreciates the beautiful flowers, "violets" and "strawberry blossoms" and the charming songs of various birds, welcoming the season of spring. In the fourth and concluding stanza of 'April Charms' Davies speaks about the corresponding effect which the seasonal change in the month of April has on him. He confesses that he forgets all the worries and tensions of life as "care" disappears like smoke when flames take hold of the forest:

When I go forth on such a pleasant day,
One breath outdoor takes all my care away;
It goes like heavy smoke, when flames take hold
Of woods that's green and fill a grate with gold.

In 'April' he sings of the "beauties of nature". He talks of "warm rain", "blossoms drenched", "leaves dripping wet" and then of the "beautiful rainbow in the sky":

Then comes a rainbow in the sky
And nature laughs, as children might,
Who had a notion once to cry.

In the next stanza the poet delightfully describes

the journey downhill:

Now over rocks and down ravines
And venturing into mazy nooks,
The hill doth find his way about. ,
And into many a caves he looks,
And laughs – as he knew his way out.

In the concluding stanza the poet speaks of the joy which the beautiful natural surrounding provides to his beloved who shakes off her angry mood and "soon come dimples in her face/ And music in her voice to joy."

'Thou Comest May' is a beautiful poem about spring. The poet praises May for its beauty and delight. He gives a beautiful description of resurgence of life and renewed activities in the phenomenal world. Every object of nature seems to participate in welcoming this happy season. The trees express their joy by sprouting new leaves and blossoming beautiful flowers while birds, both old and young, sing melodious songs. Davies gives a very delightful and realistic description of the coming of spring:

Though comest, May, with leaves and flowers,
And night grow short, and days grow long;
And for thy sake in bush and tree,
The small birds sing, both old and young

In this regard 'March' is also an important poem. The poet anxiously waits for the coming of spring season. But the moment he feels that the silent wind has started disturbing the brown leaves, the poet is convinced that "spring, for very sure, is born". Then follows the sensuous description of the morning:

Even though I saw this misty morn,
The face of Phoebus cold and white,
As hers who sits his throne at night.

The fact that even "timid hearts of birds" feel like singing and the poet is able to feel the warmth on his face, reassures him of the arrival of spring:

For I can hear how birds - not bold
Enough to sing full song - do scold
Their timid hearts to make a try,
The unseen hand of Spring doth lie
Warm on my face.

Davies enjoys the sweet and calm air. He can easily feel the pleasant warmth:

_____ the air is sweet
And calm; it has a pleasant heat
That makes my two hands swell as though
They had gloves on.

In the concluding lines of the poem 'March' he speaks of the corresponding impact of spring on human beings. Here the poet describes his own experience:

Spring makes no show
Of leaves and blossoms yet, but she
Has worked upon this blood in me
And everything of flesh I meet
Can feel, it seems, her presence sweet.

After spring comes summer, comparatively a stable season of warmth and increased activities in the phenomenal world. Summer does not strike the poet's heart as suddenly as the spring after a long winter. Davies sings of the beauties and the delight of summer in his poem 'When on Summer's Morn'. He is awakened by a variety of musical sounds of birds which are there in the atmosphere on a "summer's

morn":

When on a summer's morn, I woke,
Out to the clear, born singing rills
My bird like spirit flies
To hear the Blackbird, Cuckoo, Thrush,
Or any bird in song;
And common leaves that hum all day,
Without a throat or tongue.

As he retires to sleep, all alone in his room in a pensive mood, he recalls the delightful experience of a beautiful summer morning full of birds' songs and this inspires the poet to pour out a song which is all his own.

Back in my room alone
My heart has many a sweet bird's song
And one that's all my own.

After summer comes autumn followed by winter. Spring reawakens emotions and revives activities, while summer is relatively a stable season of warmth and increased outdoor activities. But autumn is a season of desolation and sterility. Since it is also the season of harvesting so not only trees but even fields wear a dismal look. The Romantic poet John Keats has beautifully summed up the ongoing activities in the phenomenal world during autumn in his famous poem 'Ode to Autumn'. W.H. Davies has also composed several poems about autumn. They include 'Old Autumn', 'Autumn', 'Rich Days' and 'When Autumn's Fruit', etc.

In the 'Old Autumn' the poet describes the desolation and sterility of in the phenomenal world.

He notices that in the mist of autumn "no dew drops shine". The green grass turns yellow and birds sing no songs:

Within whose mist no dewdrop shine,
And grass once green, goes yellow;
For whom no birds will sing or chirp,
On either ash or willow?

For Davies, who always looks for beauty in nature, this dismal appearance of autumn season is unbearable. He therefore, invites winter to come and take away the "unwanted life" from autumn :

If this is his poor, petted face,
With dead leaves soaked in rain
Come Winter, with your kindly frost
That's almost cruelly sane;
Take him, with his unwanted life,
To his last sleep and end
Like the cat that can not find a hare,
And the dog that has no friend.

This desolation and sterility of autumn cannot hold up Davies, the lover of beauty for long. He ultimately succeeds in discovering the beautiful aspect of even autumn in the midst of death and desolation, His poem 'Rich Days' explains this fully.

Though autumn does not have the charm of spring or the warmth of summer, still it captivates the hearts of men by its golden beauty:

Welcome to you rich Autumn days,
Ere comes cold, leaf-picking winds,
When golden stocks are seen in fields,
All standing arm - in - arm entwined;
And gallows of sweet cider seen
On trees in apples red and green.

In the second stanza of the poem, the poet gives a very sensuous description of the fruits, which are almost ripe now:

With mellow pears that cheat our teeth,
Which melt that tongues may suck them in,
With blue black damsons, yellow plums,
Now sweet and soft from stone to stem;
And wood nuts rich, to make us go.
Into the loneliest lanes we know.

Autumn is followed by winter, the fourth of the cycle of seasons. Winter is generally associated with the suspension of life, decreased outdoor activities, death and decay. Some of Davies' poems on winter are 'Winter's Beauty', ;Winter Night', 'In Winter' and 'Silver Hours'. But as we know that Davies' first priority in all objects of nature is beauty and delight. In case of winter too, he does not subscribe to the traditional view of winter but succeeds in discovering its beautiful aspects which are a source of delight for him. In 'Silver Hours', for instance, the frosty look of different objects in the phenomenal world is the point of attraction and source of delight for the poet. He therefore, welcomes winter morning which looks "lovely" to him:

Come, lovely Morning, rich in frost
On iron, wood and glass;
Show all your panes to silver gild
Each little blade of grass.

In the second stanza the poet welcomes the winter evening so that it may spread a cover of "glittering silver" on all objects of nature:

Come, rich and lovely winter's Eve,
That seldom handles gold;
And spread your silver sunsets out,
In glittering fold on fold.

In the third and final stanza of the poem 'Silver Hours' Davies invites the beautiful winter night which is frosty so that it may "dig up/ fields of diamonds":

Come, after sunset; come Oh come --
You clear frosty Night :
Dig up your fields of diamonds,
Till the heavens all dance in light!

In another poem entitled 'In Winter' the poet describes very delightfully how one winter morning he got up much earlier and heard the birds cheering "winter's skies":

And I remember how I woke,
Before my time to rise,
And heard a Robin and a Thrush
Cheering the winter's skies.

He has no regrets for the departure of summer, instead he shakes hand with winter with the help of his memory of sweet days:

Now when my summer fails to shine
And skies are cold and grey
I' ll let my Memory warm her hands
At this fine winter's day.

In a 'A Winter's Night' the poet describes how he enjoys the winter night; he gives a catalogue of the activities associated with winter nights:

It is a winter's night and cold,
The wind is blowing half a gale;

I, with a red - hot poker, stir
To take the chill of my old ale
And I drink my ale, I smoke my pipe
While fire flames leap to fight the cold;
And yet before my bed time comes
I must look out on the wide world.

The poet does not shut himself up in the house near the fireplace because of cold weather. He wants "to look out on the wide world." And as he comes out of the house he is confronted with a "strange beauty":

And what strange beauty I behold
The wild fast driven clouds this night
Hurled at the moon, whose smiling face
Still shines with undiminished light.

'Winter's Beauty' - as the title indicates, deals with the beauties of the winter season in the phenomenal world. Here too Davies' position as a lover of beauty and delight is further reinforced, as, in an otherwise season of death and decay when people prefer to remain indoors, Davies anxiously comes out of his house "to look out on the wide world" in order to discover and appreciate the beauty and delight of winter:

Now winter is here and rivers freeze;
As I walkout I see the trees,
Where in the pretty squirrels sleep,
All standing in the snow so deep,
And every twig however small,
Is blossomed white and beautiful.

The last six lines of the poem further describe the winter and present an exquisitely beautiful scene which only winter can provide:

The poet literally invokes winter to create this beautiful scene:

Then welcome, winter, with the power
To make this tree a big white flower;
To make this tree a lovely sight,
With fifty brown arms draped in white
While thousands of small fingers show
In soft white gloves of purest snow.

Davies' treatment of English flora, weather and seasons is enough to designate him as an eminent poet of nature in English in the twentieth century but like the American poet Emily Dickenson, he also seems to subscribe to the view that the inanimate objects in the phenomenal world are not the whole of nature. According to Emily Dickenson:

"Nature" is what we see
The Hill- the After noon-
Squirrel- Eclipse- the Bumble bee-
Nay- Nature is Heavens-
Nature is what we hear-
The Boblink- the sea-
Thunder- the cricket-

She suggests that animate objects too form an integral part of nature. Davies has therefore, also written quite a good number of poems about animals. They are mostly about pet animals and songbirds. He must have come into contact with these animals and birds mostly during his pilgrimage of tramping when he had to work as a labourer in the fields or look after cattle as herdsman; this is the reason that he knew them from close quarters. In fact, Davies had an intense love for the animals. He says

My love for dumb things is intense.[48]

What is important about his attitude to animals and birds is the fact that Davies treats them at par with human beings. He considers them as his companions. He talks of cows, sheep and horses as if they were his friends. Moreover not only does the poet love animals and birds, he is convinced that they also love him:

All things love me
Horse, Cow and Mouse
Bird, Moth and Bee.

In his poems about animals therefore, Davies writes about animals and birds with complete understanding. These poems express his compassion for their suffering and strong denunciation of those who commit atrocities on them, either by killing them for sport or making them capatives. In this regard mention may be made of poems like 'Broken Heart', 'Dog's Grave', 'Dogs' 'The Ox', 'The Captive Lion', 'Bird' and 'The Butterfly' etc. He curses those who load them beyond their capacity or torture them otherwise:

May men that torture things alive
Live for hundred years and have
Their wretched body stabbed with pains,
Until their toe nails pierce their brains.

Davies' attachment and affection for the animals reaches its highest point in his poem 'The Dumb World' where he equates love and care for animals, who cannot communicate their needs and pains, to religious worship. He discloses his religion in unequivocal terms:

When I give poor dumb thing my cares,

Let all men know I've said my prayers.

These poems about the animals and the aviary world do add new feathers to Davies' cap as a poet of nature. But the fact remains that he would always be remembered as " a very considerable hedgerow realist, a knight of the woods and lanes, the friend of birds and all wild things beautiful, human, impressive and very interesting."[13] Next to nature's beauty her "peace" and "ease" attracted him most. He therefore, believes that "One breath out of doors takes all my cares away."

Department of English,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh.

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 26, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. i-iv

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