



**Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous)**  
**Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103**  
**Department of English**

**Project Completion Certificate**

This is to certify that Abhishek Pal a Postgraduate student in English (ENPG/036/18) has worked on the project / term paper titled 'I See, Therefore I Am: Desiring Beyond the "Cave" in Alfred Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" and Rituparno Ghosh's *Antarmahal*' from 03.02.2020 and successfully completed the same on 21.03.2020.

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Depart of English

**I See, Therefore I Am: Desiring Beyond the “Cave” in Alfred Tennyson's “The Lady of Shalott” and Rituparno Ghosh's *Antarmahal***

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Abhisek Pal

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),  
NARENDRAPUR

I See, Therefore I Am: Desiring Beyond the “Cave” in Alfred Tennyson's “The Lady of Shalott”  
and Rituparno Ghosh's *Antarmahal*

Left unsupervised by God and tricked by the snake, Eve eats the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While she disobeys God with a “desire” to gain knowledge, God punishes her to bear childbirth pain, adding, “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (*The Holy Bible*, Gen. 3:16). The scripture allows her to have desire only for her husband under whose rule she serves as the second sex. Religious texts add to cultural paradigms. Female desire is vilified if its telos is not legitimized by patriarchy. The prohibited objects of desire include men other her husband, other women and any knowledge which would empower her to question the construct of femininity. Labour pain culturally persists as a reminder of the punishment for transgressive desire.

Adrienne Rich writes in *Of Woman Born* about the clergy’s opposition against the use of anaesthesia during childbirth in Victorian England:

The lifting of Eve’s curse seemed to threaten the foundations of patriarchal religion; the cries of women in childbirth were for the glory of God the Father. An alleviation of female suffering was seen as “hardening” society, as if the sole alternative to the mater dolorosa - the eternally suffering and suppliant mother as epitomized by the Virgin - must be the Medusa whose look turns men to stone. (Rich 168)

The monogamous, childbearing wife and the chaste maiden are portrayed as the epitome of womanhood. Female desire, thus repressed by culture, thrives in the form of the Other women: the Medusa who counters the male gaze, the Amazons who cut their breasts to improve archery skills, Medea who kills her offspring and Dalila who lures Samson astray. But as pure binaries collapse, the Virgin bears the “trace” of the Medusa. In the discourse of feminine sexuality,

transgressive desire waits on the margin, finding ways to infiltrate chastity. “The Lady of Shalott” by Alfred Tennyson and *Antarmahal* directed by Rituparno Ghosh, two texts otherwise culturally remote, bring such desire to the centre.

Both the texts offer a gendered retelling of Plato’s parable of the cave. For Plato’s man, moving out of the cave opens a portal to knowledge and welfare. If the protagonist of this parable happens to be a woman with transgressive desire, the journey ends with punishment. The story of the biblical journey from innocence to postlapsarian experience is superimposed on Plato’s ignorance-to-knowledge narrative. Stories of women punished for transcending the “cave” – the patriarchal construct of femininity – warn other women not to move outside. Such penalized women include Sycorax who is deemed a “witch” and banished to an island in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Hester Prynne who is told by a Puritan society to wear the letter “A” for her adultery in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. If let out of her cave, the woman poses the threats of equalling men in the dominions of knowledge, questioning the societal machinery which had enclosed her, and influencing other women to come outside. Therefore, she is forced to remain enclosed.

In “The Lady of Shalott”, the Lady resides on a tower where “she weaves by night and day/ a magic web with colours gay” (Tennyson lines 37-38). In *Antarmahal*, the Zamindar’s two wives, Mahamaya and Jashomoti, are kept in the inner chamber, the “antarmahal”. The women’s knowledge regarding the outside is limited. The Lady “knows not what the curse may be” (line 42). Only from a “whisper” she has learnt that a curse would befall her if she looks through the window towards Camelot. She is not aware of who cursed her, why and when. When Jashomoti asks why the Zamindar is placing the face of Queen Victoria on the idol of Durga, he abstains with an infantilizing attitude from explaining it to her. Without informing his wives, the

Zamindar has asked the priest to chant hymns in the bedroom while the Zamindar would try to impregnate Jashomoti, and has promised the priests that Mahamaya would be sent to them for their sexual gratification.

Besides keeping the women ignorant, the enclosure disciplines them into docile bodies. Plato argues, “It’s no wonder if those who have been to the upper world refuse to take an interest in everyday affairs, if their souls are constantly eager to spend their time in that upper region” (Plato 223). Patriarchy keeps women busy with “everyday affairs” and hinders their journey to the “upper region”. *The Madwoman in the Attic* critiques this hegemony, stating, “Destroyed by traditional female activities - cooking, nursing, needling, knotting - which ought to have given them life as they themselves give life to men, the women of this underground harem are obviously buried in (and by) patriarchal definitions of their sexuality” (Gilbert and Gubar 94). Their value is determined by how “productive” they are for the benefit of the patriarchal/capitalist culture. In Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, for example, in the dystopian state of Gilead, the Handmaids are appointed to bear children for the Commanders and the Marthas are kept to do the household chores of the Commanders’ houses. In Tennyson’s poem, the Lady weaves a web by replicating the reflection which appears on the mirror, but she cannot look outside to decide what to weave or whether to weave at all. Like weaving, childbearing is a feminine “labour”. Jashomoti has to mother a child, the Rajchakraborty for the Barobari, at any cost, even by suffering marital rape. The strict enforcement of enclosure with unfavourable conditions of “work” aggravates their condition.

Their access to erotic contentment is hindered as well. The Lady “hath no loyal night and true” (line 62). Jashomoti who is attracted to Brij Bhushan, the idol-maker appointed to make the Durga idol for Borobari, survives marital rape. She asks him to make for her the clay dolls of

Radha and Krishna who symbolize the manifestation of ultimate passion, while passion is what she longs for in her own life. The cat, Neelkanto, symbolizes Jashomoti's repressed desire for Brij Bhushan. Patriarchy sweeps feminine sexuality under the rug. In her essay, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power", Audre Lorde remarks, "The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation" (Lorde 54). The exploration of the erotic as a source of power and knowledge thus becomes for the women an act of reclaiming their bodies. For the Lady of the Tower and the women of "antarmahal", desire itself, hitherto repressed by culture, becomes an overpowering force which permeates their consciousness and initiates their fatalistic journey out of the "cave".

And this journey begins with looking at the object of desire. The women look with desire at men, and by doing so, they counter the male gaze. In cultural texts, the male gaze belongs to the active man who carries the narrative and provides a perspective for the spectator to whom the passive woman appears as a sexual object. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey writes, "In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 348). The male gaze is subverted as the Lady looks through the window at Lancelot: "She saw the helmet and the plume,/ She look'd down to Camelot" (lines 112-113). The male body becomes the spectacle for the female spectator. In *Antarmahal*, Mahamaya stealthily looks at Brij Bhushan as he takes a bath; she later tries to seduce him and instigates Jashomoti to do the same. Both the texts offer a "female gaze". When the priest is reading the hymns in the bedroom while the Zamindar is forcing himself upon Jashomoti without her consent, Mahamaya attempts to upset the male gaze by doing a strip-tease

before the priest, leaving him uncomfortable and unable to simultaneously gaze at her body and read the hymns. The awakening and pursuit of desire drives the women to seek ways of transcending their enclosed state.

The dark of the night in which the women leave their “cave” contrasts with the sunlight that dominates the outside of Plato's cave. Simone de Beauvoir remarks in *The Second Sex*, “For the withered old women, for the young wife doomed to the same rapid decay, there was no universe other than the smoky cave, whence they emerged only at night, silent and veiled” (Beauvoir 108). In the middle of the night, as the Zamindar forces Jashomoti to have sex with him in front of the priest, Jashomoti crying hysterically as if driven to insanity rushes out of the “antarmahal”. Similarly, coming down the Tower, the Lady looks towards Camelot like “some bold seer in trance,/ Seeing all his own mischance-/ With a glassy countenance” (lines 128-130). With the appearance of a “madwoman” who has broken out of her “attic”, she journeys to Camelot “at the closing of the day” (line 132).

On her way to Camelot, the Lady dies of the “curse”. Gazing at her, Lancelot exclaims that she “has a lovely face” (line 169). Her beauty attracts attention but her story remains unknown to the court of Camelot. Weaving is a metaphor for writing and the Lady represents the female artist whose ambition and vision are curbed by patriarchy once she opposes her enclosure. Hélène Cixous in “The Laugh of the Medusa” links women's artistic creation with female desire. She describes feminine sexuality as a

world of searching, the elaboration of a knowledge, on the basis of a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions, a passionate and precise interrogation of her erotogeneity. This practice, extraordinarily rich and inventive, in particular as concerns masturbation, is prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic

activity, each stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful. (Cixous 876)

Desire, hitherto the source of creation and passion, ironically brings the “curse” down on the Lady.

Seeing the Lady’s dead body, Lancelot “mused a little space” (line 168). The word “muse” also refers to the Muses, the nine Classical deities of creative inspiration, whose guidance is invoked by poets. In some artistic traditions, the notion of the Muse has become a patriarchal construct. The artist happens to be the primary creator, while the Muse, usually a woman, plays the passive role of inspiring him or serving as a model for his art. Catching “a glimpse of a ravishing vision” of Jashomoti’s beauty, the British painter remarks, “If she had only been the subject of my art” (Ghosh 1:43:00 – 1:43:24). Brij Bhushan, smitten by Jashomoti’s beauty, models the Durga idol’s face on hers without informing her. This incident publicly betrays Brij Bhushan’s desire for Jashomoti, with a hint that she must have reciprocated his desire. Drawing both the Zamindar’s rage and public embarrassment, this leaves Jashomoti with the option of committing suicide. Having been cast in the role of the Muse by Brij Bhushan, her narrative is silenced. The Borobari announces the reason of her death to be an incurable disease.

Also in Mahamaya’s case, the punishment-for-transgression trajectory is followed. When she agrees to make herself sexually available to the priests and tries to one-up the Zamindar by fulfilling her own motives, she is, ironically, hindered by her own menstruating body. She cannot conceive while being on her period, and consequently, would not be able to extract favours from the Zamindar by mothering a son for the Barobari. Both “The Lady of Shalott” and *Antarmahal* rely on such Icarian narratives.



While the texts end with punishment for transgressive female desire, the “cave” remains an ambiguous space. The “cave” and the Outside form a Yin/Yang duality. Despite promising deliverance, the Outside becomes representative of God-like patriarchy by reinforcing the-name-of-the-father and silencing the women as they attempt to move out. The “cave”, on the other hand, curtails the women's agency, but also sustains their narratives. The obliteration done by the Outside turns the “cave” into a nourishing, nurturing womb. Coming outside is similar to leaving the mother's womb through birth. And this birth is a movement towards impending doom. The women have an ambivalent attitude towards their enclosure. They do not completely dislike their function - the Lady is only “half sick of shadows” (line 71). But she “still delights” in weaving (line 64). Though Jashomoti is raped by her husband, she wants to be a mother after all. The “cave” allows the women to explore their desire and their role as creators. But this impression of the enclosure's womb-like “safety” which is accompanied by an extremely constricting environment is like a false consciousness. Though the threat of punishment prevails, only by attempting to move Outside, by gazing, desiring and transgressing, the women can fully reclaim their space.

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The Department of English

**Importance of Hope in Dystopia: Hope, Hopelessness and Importunate Endings of  
Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.**

Term paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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Argha Chakraborty

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Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur. Kol: 700103.

## **Importance of Hope in Dystopia: Hope Pertaining and Participating in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.**

According to *Oxford English Dictionary* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) a "Dystopia" is "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible". Historically, the word "Dystopia" was first used by John Stuart Mill in a parliamentary speech of Hansard Commons in September, 1868 to denounce the Irish Land Policy of British Commonwealth. Though Jeremy Bentham in 1818 used the word Cacotopia in his parliamentary reform journal called "Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism." Here he used the word "Cacotopia" as the antonym of Utopia<sup>1</sup>. Which means "bad place" (*OED* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Ancient Greek "Kakos" means "bad", or "wicked"; "Topos" means "place"). Whereas etymologically "Dystopia" also means "bad place" (*OED* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Ancient Greek "Dys" means "bad" and "Topos" means "place"). In literature Dystopia started flourishing during the First World War and its aftermath. Evidenced in 1924, the English translation of Soviet novelist Eugene Zamiatin's *We* by Gregory Zilboorg was the first English fiction dealing with Dystopia. Later Aldous Huxley, George Herbert Wells, George Orwell and others wrote dystopian fiction or the imagined cacophony of civilization. Renowned dystopian novelist and critic, Margaret Atwood writes,

It's a sad commentary of our age that we find Dystopias lot  
easier to believe in than Utopias: Utopias we can only

imagine; Dystopias we've already had. (Atwood, 92-93)

Dystopian fictions basically present the terrorized contemporary socio-political issues in a worst-possible scenario. Dystopian novels like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949), *Animal Farm* (1952) or Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1956) reflect the stories of innumerable political empowerment and the harsh impacts of totalitarianism. M. Keith Booker in *Dystopian Literature* wrote about dystopia,

Dystopian thought arises at moments when great  
advancements in philosophy or science and technology  
inspire such great social dreams. (Booker,2003:24)

In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* the story of the new world begins with a huge scientific and technological revolution. Where in 632 A.F.<sup>2</sup> a man's livelihood and basics of life have been changed ultimately after the invention of the "Hatchery and Conditioning Centers" all over the world. Although Booker believes Dystopia as a social criticism, in his 1994 anthology *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* he wrote about Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* and Huxley's *Brave New World*,

The great defining texts of the genre of dystopian  
fiction, both in (the) vividness of their engagement with real-  
world social and political issues, and in the scope of their  
critique of the societies on which they focus. (p. 20-21)

Thus, to focus on social criticism Huxley brought a notable character who has been raised in a Malpais Conditioning Center, an outsider of "London Hatchery and Conditioning Center" and on a diet of Shakespeare's "chastity/whore speeches" who

never recognized “Neo-Pavlovian Conditioning”<sup>3</sup>, “Bokanovsky Groups”<sup>4</sup>, “soma tablets”<sup>5</sup> or the unwanted sexual games and “feelies”<sup>6</sup> as the good identity of a really brave world. He aimed the ultimate life and searched it throughout the novel. But at the end he failed and committed suicide.

In Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, the protagonists —the father and the son— were on a survival quest in the midst of a nuclear destruction. These father and son, were committed not to give up anyway. They walked southward through the destructed America in search of food and warmth, where everything became unstable, cannibalism became the major threat of life and the civilization was at the verge of extinction. Unlike the dark atmosphere and ultimately unstable situation the father and the son were carrying “fire”<sup>7</sup> within their heart and dreamt to start again. At the end of the novel the father died and the son went with an unknown family who promised him that they don’t eat people and have the “fire”.

I said to my soul, be still and wait without hope

For hope would be the hope for the wrong thing...

(“East Coker”, iii, 23-24)

Dystopian aspects of Jamesonian dialectics pointed out that “in all its forms hope is the *sine qua non* of dystopia” (Jameson, 2005:119-120). In *Brave New World*,

the protagonist John serves a typical bearing. He was in the quest of getting back the “past” and significance of human life. Meanwhile his continuous and thorough reading of Shakespearean plays made him to think about “family”, “chastity” et cetera which were more solemn and new to him. His curiosity have searched his mother Linda out and took her with him to take care of her, in a world where “family” is slang. Margaret Atwood while talking on Savage, admitted that—

The “comfort” offered by Mustapha Mond – one of the “controllers” of this world and a direct descendent of Plato’s Guardians – is not enough for John. He wants the old back – dirt, diseases, free will, fear, anguish, blood, sweat, tears, and all. (Atwood,xiv-xv)

What Huxley wrote “comfort” is not actually the “comfort” but a choice between showing prowess and perishing. John might have thought that being one of the controllers of the world should be unfair to his own faith. Thus he chose to flee the “London Hatchery and Conditioning Center” to live himself alone. John is the only person in the “London Hatchery and Conditioning Center” who understood that how the “controllers” and the direct descendents of “Plato’s Guardians”<sup>8</sup> were controlling the world and making people’s lives conditioned and limited with some sexual fantasies, intoxicated pills and class divisions which ultimately de-humanized the society. Huxley is in this occasion a firm supporter of psychotherapy, in Freudian terms which is called “talking cure”, is deliberately used by Huxley to manipulate John again with a close conversation with Mustapha Mond, one of the “controllers” of the world. But at the same time he despises channelization and avoids manipulation. Although illustrative



aptitudes of Huxley's *Brave New World* talk about moral judgment and hopelessness. Where John Savage had to kill himself after failed to find any place to go to and to hide. Basically hopelessness works as the key motif of John's self-destruction. This hopelessness is a process that gradually grows during the progress of the novel, resulting destruction at the end.

This hopelessness is also presented in McCarthy's *The Road*. At the very beginning of his essay "The Absurdity of Hope", Alan Noble wrote,

Readers of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* face a challenging thematic and philosophical balancing act: if they acknowledge the novel's weightiness, they must reckon with its stark, unrelenting fatalism and its profound yet complex hope for a better future. (Noble, 1)

At the heart of the novel resides a paradox and tremendous complexity: paradox of teachings and lessons, complexity of irrational phenomenon which procrastinates the salvation of hope. From the very beginning of the novel the father taught his son what to do and what not, to survive the utterly dismantle atmosphere of the world, and often teaches him how to use the gun to shoot himself. Many critics biblically compared these father and son with the two generation Christ (Christ the Father and Christ the Son), where self-degradation comes to an absolute opposite of the biblical connotation. Even during the final times of his life the father reminded his son what to do if any cannibal comes toward him— to put the gun in his mouth and shoot. But at the same time the father taught the son that the son has to carry the "fire" within his heart after

his death. This duality makes unnecessary conjunction of the father's teachings and lessons to the son. Many critics have pointed out the result of the father's "throbbing hopelessness" or the "indigent hope" which presents inarticulate progress of the novel. Shelley L. Rambo in an essay "Beyond Redemption" wrote—

McCarthy catches the reader in a schizophrenic, and distinctly American, post-apocalyptic crisis of meaning: between the craving for a happy ending (for resolution, for redemption) and the recognition of its impossibility (there is in Christian terms, no resurrection ahead). (Rambo, 101)

Which quite adaptable and makes paradox of the whole thing. If biblical references of the novel really conjugate with the story of the desolated world, then there should have been a story of resurrection. At the end of the novel, the son had to go with the unknown reliable family. Rune Grulund in an essay "Fulcrums and Borderlands" wrote that the decision took by the son was, "validating the father's words (concerning goodness) in physical as well as conceptual form" (99-100).

Hey you don't help them to bury the light

Don't give them without a fight. ("Hey You", 0:58-1:05)

If carrying hope is important for a dystopian novel to overcome then maintaining and protecting the hope is equally important. While talking about machinery and power balance, Martin Heidegger wrote,

The will to power is the ground of the necessity of value-positing and of the origin of the possibility of the value judgment... values are the conditions of itself posited by the will to power. Only where the will to power, as the fundamental characteristic of everything real. (Heidegger, 74-75)

To achieve the goal— to come out of the dystopian world— one should have to concern about the “value judgment”. In McCarthy’s *The Road* the father is well aware of making his own judgments. That’s why he never hesitated to kill a cannibal who tried to stab his son. After that he told, “I’ll kill anyone who touches you, because that’s my job” (McCarthy, 36). Even he punished the thief who wanted to snatch their food and bearings. Because he knew very well about the priorities. But in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, John totally failed in his “value judgment” and at the end of the novel repented his own folly. Though his thoughts were right, yet he failed because of his hopelessness and the lack of self-esteem. Although Huxley superimposes the social condition to be the primary cause of John’s ultimate failure. Huxley wrote in *Brave New World Revisited*, “ours was a nightmare of too little order; theirs, in the seventh century A.F. of too much” (Huxley, 35).

Quoting Jameson again, “in all its forms hope in the *sine qua non* of dystopia” — Embodied in a decorative ostentation both the novels talk about salvaging hope and morality. But the presentation of hope is quite different in both the novels. At the end of their respective stories, Huxley’s protagonist, John commits suicide and McCarthy’s goes to re-civilize the society. Where John becomes a psychic failure, the boy of

McCarthy's text becomes the light-bearer of a new world. Though according to Fredric Jameson 'hope' is inevitable of any dystopian stories, at the same time 'hopelessness' also performs a major role in dystopian fiction. John Savage's unwanted doom was none but the result of hopelessness. In the other hand McCarthy's protagonist, the father dies off physical illness. But his palpitating thoughts and uncontrolled emotional attachment with his son made gruesome scattered approach to his own dream for the sake of civilization. Towards the end of his journey, the father talked like,

I try to look like any common travelling killer, but my heart is hammering. When it comes to the boy, I have only one question. Can you do it when time comes? (McCarthy, 133-134)

He lamented himself in the death bed.

Moreover, in dystopian stories "hope" works as the dawn of the coming future. In both the novels "hope" came figuratively. In *Brave New World*, Shakespearean plays brought the 'hope' to overcome the conditioned society to John Savage's mind. Whereas in *The Road*, "hope" to overcome the desolated state of world appears with the belief of "fire" which was carried by the father and son through the entire novel. Where the dystopian design of *Brave New World* rests as it is throughout the novel. But readers can still hope that the self-sacrifice of John Savage can influence some people who could revolt against the constructed and scientifically conditioned society. Although *The Road* talks of resurrection and recreation of belief and sympathetic approach towards the society, one should imagine that the family which the son went with in the search of

unknown would help him to spread the meaning of “fire” or the “holy spirit” to the future world.

#### **Endnotes:**

1. The term coined by Sir Thomas More from Ancient Greek “eu-topos”, or “ou-topos” which means “good place”, or “nowhere”.
2. After Ford; 632 years after the great medical and technological revolution lead by Henry Ford.
3. A conditioning room for the babies. Where babies are conditioned according to their social status.
4. A grouping system that divides people into five groups- Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon.
5. A special tablet with high dosage of active drug, used for relaxation. The name “soma” is coined from Ancient Indian “somrasa”, a drink for the gods.
6. Audio-visual and sensual show where spectators can have sensual enjoyment and even can participate

7. Symbolic “fire” that carries sympathy and love within.
8. A group of least people who most secretly maintains the privacy of their respective hatchery and conditioning centers.

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**Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous)**  
**Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103**  
**Department of English**

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**At War with Self**

**A study on the depiction of mental health issues in Arthur  
Miller's Death of a Salesman and Netflix original series  
Bojack Horseman**

Term Paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) in English

*Submitted by*

Kaustab Sarkar

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RAMAKRISHNA MISSION RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),  
NARENDRAPUR, KOLKATA- 700103

Kaustab Sarkar

Prof. Pranab Mondal

English

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### **At War with Self - A study on the depiction of mental health issues in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Netflix original series *BoJack Horseman***

Mental health issues have long been a topic in literature and art that has been scarcely researched about and the portrayal of mental illness in art and literature has changed throughout the time, going hand in hand with science as they start to make attempts to unravel the mysteries of the human psyche. With time, the subject of mental health got distinguished into various segmentations and the modern and contemporary literature started portraying them not as the main topic of their work but as a trait or a flaw of the characters they create. Similarly, in contemporary times with films and television shows, they show the symptoms of several mental health issues in a certain character to spread awareness. This paper explains in detail, various mental health issues shown in the 1949 American drama *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and a Netflix original TV series *BoJack Horseman* (2014-2020). How memories of the past incidents could have such a big influence on the mental health of a character or an individual. The paper takes the example of Willy Loman and *BoJack Horseman* and analyzes their psyche to reveal why they are like they are.

Memory is the ability that helps to remember experiences of the past and power to process or recall in one's mind, facts, impressions, skills, habits and experiences that were previously learned (Kendra, 4).

Memory consolidation is the transformation of short-term memory into long term memory. Duration of the short-term memory is usually about 30 seconds which gets erased from our memories if it's not an important event. In case the incident or information has a significant effect, it is transformed into long-term memory. When information is recalled and rehearsed over and over again, the neural networks that are responsible for storing memories become strengthened (Amelia 65). When an individual recalls an event continuously, the

pathway that remembers that information gets stronger and it gets easier to retrieve that information in the future.

Traumatic memories are by nature emotionally overwhelming and stressful for an individual's coping mechanisms. Often, objects as simple as a picture, or an event like a marriage, can bring back to people's mind traumatic memories of the past and they try to obstruct these experiences from their mind so that they can proceed with their lives (Cholbi 27). These reminders often decrease and diminish as time passes.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs due to traumatic memories; a psychiatric disorder suffered by people who witnessed or experienced a traumatic event in the past (Al-Hussainawy, 294). Individuals with PTSD have exceptional, upsetting feelings and contemplations identified with their experience that keeps going long after the horrendous event has finished. They may remember the occasion through flashbacks or bad dreams; they may feel pity, dread or outrage; and they may feel disengaged or estranged from others (Murphy 87). Individuals with PTSD may keep away from circumstances or individuals that make them remember the awful event, and they may have solid negative responses to something as conventional as an accidental touch or a loud noise.

While talking about Willy Loman from *Death of a Salesman*, the creator Arthur Miller mentions,

*"... and we would see the inside of a man's head... for the inside of his head is a mass of contradictions."*

Willy Loman's introduction in the play happened as a salesman who is ambitious but is characterized by failure, and therefore, he takes his life with his own hands. As Cathy Caruth, an American theorist of trauma mentions that being traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. Throughout the drama, the audiences see multiple examples of psychological disorder in Willy's character as he experiences random flashbacks, social isolation and repetition of the events which caused trauma. Willy Loman's character also showed various symptoms of PTSD such as re-experiencing random traumatic incidents, avoiding the remembrance of memories that we're painful, specifically the ones which caused severe issues in his occupational and social life (Cholbi 468).

Although Willy represents a normal human being having mundane dreams about getting a good job, he has a confusing character having two different

personalities: one being a tired old man and the other one of a young well-liked man experienced in his flashbacks. Traumatic reality is felt in act one, when the protagonist gets back home out of control, disclosing to his wife, Linda, what had befallen him when he was driving to Yonkers and how he had gone off the street. He converses with her regarding the nostalgic occasions when he used to be a salesman, equipped for doing anything (Bob-Waksberg). Such correlation between the present and the past overpowers Willy and places him in conflicts regarding his experiences:

*"I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I'd've gone the other way over the white line I might've killed somebody... I have such, such strange thoughts"*

Willy, throughout his life, endures the loss of his social position and identity. He failed as a father. He faces internal and external conditions like distorted images, poverty, despair and misery. His narrative story, active memory combining with imagination and his flashbacks are cooperating in his brain to uncover the historical trauma he had experienced. Presently, he endures his difficult life and prepares to retreat to the past to get away from traumatic experiences. The audience sees him drifting off into the past when he comes face to face with his son Biff who was away from home for a year. Hence, the drama essentially illuminates the experiences of trauma as well as mirroring the dilemmas of Willy's imbalanced and disoriented mind. Willy battles to get away from the issue that has tormented him. Maybe, in some portion of his past, he had a typical life out of his excruciating recollections. In his current flashback, he uncovers how his life was changed. He is fixated by a horrible mystery of the past that has shielded him from discovering harmony in his current life (Bob-Waksberg). These can be considered as repressed memories which are pieces from his past which had become a mystery.

As a defence mechanism, he attempts to derive defensive responses to some agonizing recollections in order to overcome them. To brighten himself up and to overlook any unpleasant recollections, he escapes into when things were better for his family as he had the option to manage the issues they experienced. Because of this, Willy's refusal of this present reality is extreme to the point that in his psyche he returns in order to re-experience upbeat days of his life. Around then, the money related viewpoints were less of a burden and his children energetically invited their dad when he returned home from a lengthy road trip:

*"Soon as you finish the car, boys. I wanna. see ya. I got a surprise for you, boys."*

Willy's recollections are considered to be genuine, portrayals of the past, and unaltered even throughout the time. The progress of time gives these recollections with indistinct pictures of what he has just experienced to the extraordinary that they are intertwined with his illusions and imaginations. Contextually, Willy gets away from the disappointment of his two children by depicting them as stars or incredible people, particularly in comparison with their neighbour kid, Bernard (Bob-Waksberg). He infiltrates this picture to such an extent that he relates them with a legendary figure "Adonises".

*"Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises."*

All through the play, various understandings are responsible to reveal the disclosure of Willy's PTSD. The most significant of them incorporate Biff being back home and Willy's horrendous recollections that take him to the disparity. This damaged man is looking to show to himself and the outside world his esteem as an individual, and, consequently, he can get what he needs. In order to conquer his feeling of underestimation and marginalization, he respects himself as a man of individual value as he can allow his children an opportunity to accomplish what he proved unable. Consequently, Amelia opined, he persuades himself that his demise can reestablish his conspicuousness in his family's eyes and recover for him his lost feeling of respect (2). In this regard, he accepts that he is worth more to his family and the world if he takes his life.

Bojack Horseman is a Netflix original animated series by Raphael Bob-Waksberg where the storyline revolves around the experiences of a horse and the characters around him. As a first impression, the show doesn't convince the viewers that it provides one of the most thorough and nuanced depictions of mental health issues. However, by the end of six seasons, the series time and again proved its knack for the depiction of mental health issues like anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in a sensitive and complex manner. In a fifth season episode entitled "free churro" BoJack gave a twenty-two-minute-long monologue as the eulogy of his mother who had passed away. During the eulogy, BoJack opened up about his childhood experiences with his parents and constantly bashes his mother for being 'un-motherly'. He doesn't seem very upset for the death of his mother and uses the stage of the funeral as a platform to release all the pent-up anger and frustration towards his mother (Cholbi 1059). Bojack made fun of his dead mother, called her names, made offensive jokes about her,

he even made fun of his father who was dead even before the series began. Although Bojack didn't seem to be upset, it was understood that deep down inside he was upset because all the while when his mother was alive Bojack could at least hope for her to love him but that's never going to happen anymore because *"My mother is dead and everything is worse now"*.

This type of behaviour is not uncalled for since over the progression of the series the viewer's get to see snippets of BoJack's childhood and how he grew up in a dysfunctional family where the relationship between his parents was toxic and dysfunctional too. Even in the "free churro" episode while talking about his family, Bojack says, *"all three of us were drowning and we didn't know how to save each other"*. What BoJack doesn't know is that his inclination for hasty conduct, unstable relationships, and self-loathing was originating a long time before he was born. Truth be told, BoJack's specific image of sadness has profound, amazing roots, and they are tangled inseparably from those of his family tree.

Post-traumatic stress disorder occurs as a response to the direct experience of events that is traumatic as well as indirectly getting to know things that would cause trauma. When it comes to trauma, through direct experiences people can connect with their feelings, but what happens when the subject doesn't know about their traumatic experiences? The trauma faced by BoJack's parents and grandmother has soared through the subconscious of Bojack which brings about the idea of intergenerational trauma especially in the episode of season 4 entitled "Time's arrow marches on" where flashback of BoJack's grandmother, Honey Sugarman's trauma was showcased (Amelia, 4).

One could put the surface-level fault on BoJack's parents for his flaws. Notwithstanding, season four confounds this story as it also dives into the life of BoJack's harshly toned and insensitive mother, Beatrice Horseman, who experienced trauma on account of her patents. Furthermore, BoJack's grandparents additionally had their catastrophes to fight with. From this point of view, one could state that BoJack and his family are stuck in this pattern of abuse, bound to suffer and beget torment.

Laura mentioned that a variety of psychological disorders including dietary disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, borderline personality disorders and substance abuse disorders are valuable but maladaptive methods of desensitizing extraordinary psychic agony (Laura, 126). Also, BoJack is the ideal clinical case of an individual attempting to keep his traumatically-initiated torment under

control, showing indications of a few of the above-mentioned dysfunctional behaviours.

Traumatic memories and their reoccurrence have severe biological and psycho-social impacts on individuals. Adrenal activities resulting from the high levels of stress caused by traumatic memories changes brain functioning which makes the individuals suffer socially because of symptoms like intrusive thoughts, memory fragmentation, flashbacks and dissociation (Kendra, 32).

Those who are distressed due to their traumatic memories might be constantly "reliving" flashbacks or nightmares which can result in their withdrawal from social circles or families, in an attempt of avoiding exposure to reminders of their unwanted traumatic memories.

Conflicts, moodiness and physical aggression results in dysfunctional social relationships which leads these individuals to use substance abuse as a faulty coping mechanism for dealing with anxiety.

Severe anxiety, depression and trauma stem commonly from these memories. They often have symptoms of sleeplessness, apathy, irritability, inability in controlling impulsive behaviour; all of which can be seen in the character of Bojack Horseman (Amelia, 6).

Bojack abuses substance and drinks alcohol to overabundance to say the very least; he also eats compulsively while loathing his body and scolding himself for binge eating. He battles to keep up stable relationships, on the other hand, bashing and detesting his companions and partners.

Trauma, regardless of whether it's intergenerationally transmitted or straightforwardly experienced, can seize our brains and unknowingly spur us to make and re-make the traumatic experiences people have encountered. Freud appropriately named this the repetition compulsion, contending that people bring the past into the present as a method of creating authority and expertise in a circumstance that once caused us incredible torment and agony.

Therefore, one gets to see and be aware of how contemporary art, literature and drama shows the aftereffects of a traumatic incident faced by a character or an individual. This paper showed how both Willy Loman of *Death of a Salesman* and Bojack from Bojack Horseman both had different types of severe mental health issues and how these constantly affected their day-to-day functioning. Willy Loman used to escape the reality to relive the good times in the past as a



coping mechanism for his traumatic memories whereas Bojack abuses substance, behaves badly with the people around him and often goes on a bender which lasts weeks, even months. Although Willy Loman suffered from PTSD and BoJack's cause for his mental health issues are the intergenerational trauma, both the characters either die in the end or come close to dying. The modern playwrights and the contemporary screenwriters have provided a nuanced and detailed depiction of how trauma affects mental health and how it can be deadly for a character or an individual.

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**Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous)**  
**Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103**  
**Department of English**

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The Department of English

The representation of the American Dream in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and  
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Term paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
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Submitted by:

Subhajit Sardar

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Ramakrishna mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur

The American dream is a term which is introduced by James Thruslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* in 1931. Captain Edward Johnson travelled from England to New England which is now known as the United States or America. Johnson declared that all the oppressed, imprisoned and scurrilously derided people will be gathered for the service of Christ in the new land of America. He further added that America is the place where God will create new heaven. Adams describes the American dream as a "dream with which life should be better, richer, fuller for everyone with opportunity according to their ability regardless of class, race and nationality" (Adams, P.20). The American Dream connotes the equality, liberty, pursuit of happiness but in reality it is impossible to attain this dream. Through *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald shows that the discrimination is still present in the American society. Miller through the character of Willy Loman reveals the impossibility of the American Dream. Willy ignores all social parameters and tries to become prosperous in his own way and he fails to fulfill his dream. Another aspect is the ever- evolving nature of human beings. This aspect is also responsible for the failure of the American Dream. Lacanian theorist Slavoj Zizek writes in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jaques Lacan*, "the relation of the subject to the object experienced by everyone of us in a dream: the subject, faster than the object, gets closer and closer to it and yet can never attain it." Lacan's theory suggests that the nature of human desire is, not to attain full satisfaction but to produce itself as a new desire. The hero of the novel *The Great Gatsby* wants to get back his beloved Daisy but fails to get her in spite of having all the ability. In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Loman also wants to earn money and respect in his own way but fails.

The novel *The Great Gatsby* demonstrates the dream cannot be successful because of the way it is understood by the society. The materialistic view of people is also responsible for the failure of the American Dream. With the introduction of a consumerist life style, the traditional ideals of the American Dream shifts to a focus on material possessions and individual pleasure. Rose Adrinne Gallo explains in *F Scott Fitzgerald*,

" It was an era of parties and good times, both for the wealthy like Gatsby and the Buchanans, who wanted to take part in the fun, like the guests at Myrtle Wilson's apartment or the thousands who flocked to speakeasies for liquor, jazz, dancing, a general relaxation of inhibitions."

The lives of the characters in *The Great Gatsby*, specially Gatsby, depict the culture of excessive consumerism and wealthy living. Fitzgerald portrays Gatsby as a self- made man who becomes prosperous from a poor background. He becomes successful and everyone in America was seeking that success at that time. Jay Gatsby achieves wealth but he denies legal way to become a millionaire. This way leads him into his downfall. Gatsby shows the outward beauty of his life style and he asks Nick about his wealth:

"My house looks well, doesn't it? See how the whole front of it catches the light."(Fitzgerald, P.48)

This novel represents the characters who are interested in materialistic life and never get interested in working hard. Myrtle Wilson, wife of George Wilson is a character whose American dream is to achieve wealth and live a luxurious life. In order to achieve her dream she betrayed her husband who is a poor man. To attain the luxurious life Mrs. Wilson started an illegal love affair with Tom who is a wealthy person. Tom is the representative of that society she wants to live. She attends parties with Tom. Nick attends one of such parties with Tom and Mrs. Wilson , where he describes Mrs. Wilson: "Mrs. Wilson had changed her

costume sometime before and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon florets of cream' coloured chiffon."( Fitzgerald, P.21) Tom and Daisy are also from wealthy families. Tom is a careless person. Tom does not know how to behave with his wife and family. His personality is considered as vulgar and mean. The novel portrays that money cannot buy happiness. Obsessed with the idea of achieving Daisy's love again Gatsby forgot to pay attention to the moral and social principles. Instead of being a noble, wealthy man, Gatsby becomes careless like Tom and Daisy. In this novel Gatsby's desire is to get Daisy. If he becomes unable to get back Daisy, all his wealth will be worthless. He fails to get Daisy back. Thus the impossibility of the American Dream comes out. Gatsby wants to change his past to decide his future but fails to do so. He tries to go against the norm of the society in an illegal way. But he fails. Daisy remains with Tom and Gatsby dies. Some other characters also present the hollowness of the society. Catherine, Myrtle's Sister is a lesbian and Nick describes her as a strange person. He says, "she came in with such proprietary haste, and looked around so possessively at the furniture that I wondered if she lived here. But when I looked at her, she laughed moderately, repeated my question aloud and told me she lived with a girl friend at a hotel."( Fitzgerald, P. 20) Nick also describes Mr. McKee as a pale feminine man. These characters search for wealth as a hope to fulfill their empty spiritual world. The deaths of Myrtle, George, and Gatsby at the end signify the destruction of the American Dream. These characters overvalued materialism and money instead of their ideals and chased their dream till the end of their life.

Arthur Miller in his *Death of a Salesman* portrays the American Dream beautifully. He reveals the hollowness of the American Dream through the protagonist of The play Willy

Loman. The play deals with Willy Loman's desire to become prosperous but Willy unable to attain his dream. That is why he suicides. Loman, a 63 year old man works all of his life as a Salesman. He goes against the social parameters and struggles to fulfill his dream. Willy carries the wrong concept of the American Dream. He has always believed that success comes to those who are well- liked. He does not seem to be much concerned about the quality of the product he is selling. He thinks that his customers buy because they like him. He becomes blind in his dream and he does not see the reality. This leads to the downfall of Willy Loman. He focuses on material values of life and goes against realistic values. Loman lives in phantasy, illusion. The play criticises the American materialism and the self-delusion that people were afflicted with. Miller's critique targets the greed that some people show in presenting their dreams for wealth. However, Willy tries to establish his fortune in his own way going against the social parameters. Willy fails to cope up with the changes in the business atmosphere after World War-II. He sticks to traditional models represented in his father who presents the tradition'-business. Willy tries to apply his father's principles. The American society was characterised by a strong sense of individualism. Jim Cullen says that the people of America " who with nothing but pluck and ingenuity, created financial empires that towered over the national imagination."In the wake of industrial progress , America witnessed a radical shift in social and economic values. There was a shift from individualism to social conformity. However, Loman still clung to the old model, stressing the individualism at the expense of social conformity. Willy's brother Ben is a symbol of success that he wants to reach in his life. Willy talks about Ben: "The men knew what he wanted and went out and got it! Walked into a jungle and comes out, the age of twenty one and he is rich."(Miller, 28) These lines suggest the hollowness of the American Dream. Willy also, like David Singleman in the play, wants to be well- liked by all the people. He unable to



become such a person just as Salesman. Willy lives in the past. In his young age he was successful in the business but in his old age he is unable to meet the success. It produces a conflict in his mind as he says to his wife Linda, "You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take me.... I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me by."(Miller, 23)

The problem with Willy is that he believes that one can succeed in business by imposing his personal perspective without heeding other concerns. He says: "The man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead."(Miller, 21)

Miller also employs some symbol in the play. For example, the car is used for familial solidarity. Willy starts to think that he is losing control over his car and his life. Willy commits suicide by the car. He tries to prove to himself that his life would end with a last act of control: control over his car. In Willy's house no one realises the reality of the American Dream. Biff realises the failure of his father and he rejects all his teachings as lies. He proclaims, "We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house' (Miller, 104 ). Willy is unable to face the dilemma and commits suicide. The crux of Miller's point regarding the American Dream is that success and prosperity are better attained by facing the challenging situations of the reality of American life rather than romanticizing fanciful dreams . Willy' brother Ben accepts the value of the past and also the manifestations of modern tendency. That is why Ben is capable of attaining his dream. He compromises with the changes in the new generation. He advises Biff: "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy you will never get out of the jungle that way."( Miller, 34) Willy never understands this and becomes unsuccessful. Willy's neighbour Charley is the symbol of reason and logic. He advises Willy for the future of his children but Willy denies him all the time. He chooses his own way to complete his dream. He works hard but he is unable to match himself with the changes of the society. Like

Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*, Willy wants to change his past to decide his future but fails. The inability to find out the reality is the reason for his decline. At the end of play he dies and his suicide is seen as the continuation of his dream.

Both Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman* hold the picture that the problem is not in the American Dream rather it is in the way we apply it. Both the protagonists of these two texts fail to fulfill their dream because they want to go against reality in an illegal way. They give more values to the materialistic world than the realistic world. Another aspect is the ever- evolving nature of human desire which is also responsible for the failure of the American Dream. Both the writers in these two novels go against the greed in human desire. Willy's greedy version of the American Dream and Gatsby's desire to get back his beloved Daisy who is now someone's wife make them collapse. Other characters also represent the hollowness of the American society and the failure of the American Dream.

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**Art vs. Reality: “Creating an Artistic World and Deviating from the Physical in W. B. Yeats’  
Byzantium Poems and Robert Silverberg’s Science Fiction Novella *Sailing to Byzantium*.”**

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Submitted by

Subir Giri

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),  
NARENDRAPUR

**Art vs. Reality: “Creating an Artistic World and Deviating from the Physical in W. B. Yeats’ Byzantium Poems and Robert Silverberg’s Science Fiction Novella *Sailing to Byzantium*.”**

“Without art,” said G. B. Shaw, “the crudeness of reality make the world unbearable.” A work of art may appear to be real, sound real and leads us to a different emotional state. But we must remember one thing that ‘art’ is about ‘reality’; it is not ‘reality’. F. Nietzsche says, “We have art so that we shall not die of reality.” The famous Greek philosopher Plato in his book *The Republic* points out the relationship between ‘art’ and ‘reality’. Through his ‘theory of mimesis’, he argues that “the artist who makes a likeness of thing knows nothing about reality but only about the appearance...” (*The Republic*, 429). He, therefore, gives an example of ‘bed’ and comments that the artist’s representation stands at “third remove from reality” (442). Aristotle in his *Poetics* develops this theory of representation.

But in the late nineteenth century the idea of ‘art as imitation’ began to fade from western aesthetics and it was replaced by theories of art as expression, as communication, art as pure form, art as whatever elicits an ‘aesthetic’ response, and a number of other theories. Bertolt Brecht says, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.”

Byzantium poems (“Sailing to Byzantium” and “Byzantium”) of William Butler Yeats and the novella *Sailing to Byzantium* of Robert Silverberg deal with the similar theme of art, reality, imagination and more than reality(i.e. hyperreality) which have made them possible to create their own subjective and artistic world. The paper is destined to show how art escaping reality, acts as a medium of outer and inner world for artistic exploration and deviates from one world to the other.

Artist is a 'maker'. His instrument of thought is the creative imagination; it has a different kind of insight from the abstract intellect and must not be subservient to it. By means of this he creates a world of passionate action, whose very structure is an evaluation of human experience, whether or not it is expounded in his statement. His artistic vision and whatever lies beyond it is made clear through the intensity of his conceptions, and if he is great enough it is not only powerful and coherent, but is felt to be morally valid even beyond his created world. Thus Homer, Dante and Shakespeare have each defined in their art the vision of an age or a people, and we, who may not accept it as our own in practical life, yet acknowledge in reading any of them that life by those lights was a worthwhile adventure.

Artists often use their works as an expression of their innermost thoughts and feelings. Yeats took the poet's creative responsibility seriously. He sets out to create a world throughout his artistic imagination embodying whatever is permanent and immortal. In *Byzantium* poems he shows the transformative power of art; the ability of art to express the ineffable and to step outside the boundaries of self. In these poems Yeats describes a metaphorical journey to Byzantium, a mind-created world filled with timeless art, that the speaker embarks on in order to discover a medium of art through which he can express himself. He demonstrates how art transcends morality and is the only medium through which the speaker's soul can be purified and preserved.

Yeats employs motif of 'gold' and 'music' to clarify how art is a medium that transcends history and how art is a medium that can allow one's soul to endure on earth. Gold is a material that is timelessly valued, while music is designed purely for the task of touching someone and having an effect on that person. The speaker asks the golden handiwork on the wall to 'sing' to his soul, demonstrating the artist's ability to have a meaningful and emotional impact on him:

O sages standing in God's holy fire

As in the gold mosaic of a wall,

Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,

And be the singing-masters of my soul. ("Sailing to Byzantium", 17-20)

In his imaginative world, Yeats by taking the form of golden bird is putting himself before the people of Byzantium on pedestal of gold. It is bird not made by any human hand, but hammered into shape on the divine smithy in purgatory:

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,

More miracle than bird or handiwork,

Planted on the star-lit golden bough,

Can like the cocks of Hades crow,

Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud

In glory of changeless metal

Common bird or petal

And all mere complexities of mire and blood. ("Byzantium", 17-24)

Just as the mosaic could sing to his soul, the poet's desires for his soul to take a grand artistic form that can then be sung to "lords and ladies of Byzantium." And it is possible for him as his soul will be like the souls of Byzantium, flitting about like the flames of fire, which is unearthly. It is not the fire raised by the steel in friction. It is unearthly fire of purgatory, which no storm can disturb and which purges the soul into the likeness of flame as described by Dante in *Divine Comedy*. Art's ability to impact others is done "Of whatever is past, or passing, or to come," demonstrating that years after one's death, a part of oneself will remain golden and precisely preserved in art and can continue to have effect on the many generations to come.

The artistic superiority of Yeats contrasting with reality reaches its height in his clear view of the vast ocean of time and space bound life through which “blood-begotten spirits” (“... an image, man or shade/ Shade more than man, more image than a shade,”) are seen moving forward on the backs of dolphins, the proverbial escorts of souls to the kingdom of dead:

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,  
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,  
The golden smithies of the Emperor!  
Marbles of the dancing floor  
Break bitter furies of complexity,  
Those images that yet  
Fresh images beget,  
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea. (“Byzantium”, 33-40)

The science fiction novella *Sailing to Byzantium* by Robert Silverberg is based on the same idea which Yeats dealt with in his poem “Sailing to Byzantium”. The novella discusses the artistic desire for transcendence “putting aside the mortal cowl for immortality in a Grecian idyll.” Whereas Yeats uses romantic imagination for artistic exploration, Silverberg uses modern science as a tool to show his superiority over art. He sets his artistic world in a remote future of fiftieth century surrounded by five temporal cities: “Though there were never more than five cities, they changed constantly...people saw no point in keeping anything very long” (Silverberg,1).

The novelist portrays a structural, depopulated but immortal world where humans use their advanced technology to reconstruct the great cities of Earth's past, which are somewhat accurate interpretations of historical places such as Alexandria, Mohenjo-Daro, Timbuctoo etc. Populated with artificial “temporaries” and built by robots, these cities are used somewhat like resorts for the



placid and technologically wealthy citizens, who have nothing better to do than keep up with their social circles as they explore the streets of each new city. Silverberg while giving the physical description of Gioia, the heroine of the novella puts a visual representation:

Gioia was not much like the rest in that regard, though she seemed identical in all other ways. She was short, supple, slender, dark-eyed, olive-skinned, narrow-hipped, with wide shoulders and flat muscles. They were all like that, each one indistinguishable from the rest, like a horde of millions of brothers and sisters - a world of small lithe childlike Mediterraneans, built for juggling, for bull-dancing, for sweet white wine at midday and rough red wine at night. They had the same slim bodies, the same broad mouths, the same great glossy eyes. He had never seen anyone who appeared to be younger than twelve or older than twenty.(2)

The expression of Yeasts' desire wholly spiritual in content, Silverberg brings it "down to Earth", realizing the longing in realist, albeit futuristic fashion. He gives mortal desires to his immortal protagonist, Charles Phillips. Because of that Phillips losing Gioia becomes very frustrated:

He lost track of time. Weeks, months, years? He had no idea. In this city of exotic luxury, mystery and magic, all was in constant flux and transition and the days had a fitful, unstable quality. Buildings and even whole streets were torn down one afternoon and re-erected, within days, far away. Grand new pagodas sprouted like toadstools in the night...it was no use asking anyone. (13)

The poem "Sailing to Byzantium" is instrumental theme of the novella, which explores complex ideas of immortality and eternity, impermanence and reality. The protagonist visits in a world mechanized and immortal where he gets a new identity. Except the date(1984) and place(New

York) “he knew almost nothing substantial about his former existence.” Towards the end of the novella Y’ang-Yeovil discloses mechanisms behind them:

We are a step beyond the temporaries - more than a step, a great deal more. They do only what they are instructed to do, and their range is very narrow. They are nothing but machines, really. Whereas we are autonomous. We move about by our own will; we think, we talk, we even, so it seems, fall in love. But we will not age. How could we age? We are not real. We are mere artificial webworks of mental responses. We are mere illusions, done so well that we deceive even ourselves. (29)

Phillips is shocked to find out that he is artificial, but eventually realizes that he is still a real, thinking, feeling being. It is Silverberg’s art of characterization that brings life in his immortal world.

So we find that both Yeats and Robert Silverberg create their own artistic world in their work and now it is time for us to see how they take the flight based on artistic wings and fly away from present reality. Like the enchanted listener of a nightingale’s music, the speaker of these Byzantium poems (“Sailing to Byzantium”, “Byzantium”) travels through his art to an imaginative world, Byzantium. Setting in fiftieth century futuristic world, the protagonist of Silverberg’s novella *Sailing to Byzantium* visits one city to another according to their wish.

Keats is so delighted by the enchanted music of the nightingale that he throws off the burden of self-consciousness, and sinks gradually into a world “Of beechen green and shadows numberless” (“Ode to Nightingale”, 9). He escapes from present reality into the higher reality of dreams and yearnings. For him it is an imaginative ideal world of beauty which is free from the cruelties of time. Yeats on the other hand is similarly very much conscious about the present situation of Ireland:

That is no country for old men. The young

In one another's arms, birds in the trees

– Those dying generations – at their song,

The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,

Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long

Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.

Caught in that sensual music all neglect

Monuments of unageing intellect. (“Sailing to Byzantium”, 1-8)

Therefore he does not live in this world. He creates his imaginative world Byzantium, and tries to escape reality:

“And therefore I have sailed the sea s and come

To the holy city of Byzantium.” (15-16)

The listener of nightingale’s music in “Ode to Nightingale” finally comes back to self-consciousness. The song of nightingale and his created world is a temporary spell of imaginative excursion into the realm of unconsciousness where the poet’s yearnings and longings find poetic release. Unlike Keats’s temporary escapism, Yeats wishes to escape permanently from reality into his immortal artistic world:

“Once out of nature I shall never take

My bodily form from any natural thing.” (“Sailing to Byzantium”, 25-26)

The speaker of the poem escapes from the present world of mortality and temporality. But in the novella, the futuristic world is immortal and the cities are temporary; they build for the visitors for temporary pleasure; the citizens are robots, visitors are software. Gioia escapes from Charles as she has shown some sign of age which is an indication of mortal element: “But that seemed strange.

Grey hair, on Gioia? On a citizen? A temporary might display some appearance of ageing, perhaps, but surely not a citizen. Citizens remained forever young” (Silverberg,10).

The escapist world is a kind of place where new identities are formed. Both Yeats and Silverberg try to throw off their mortal identity and gain a new identity in their immortal futuristic world. The speaker of the poem wants to be a golden bird who would sing “To the lords and ladies of Byzantium/ Of what is past, or passing, or to come.” The protagonist of the novella by forgetting his past identity that “he was Charles Phillips and had come from 1984,” now becomes a software, a visitor in the fiftieth century:

In my era we called it software. All I am is a set of commands, responses, cross-references, operating some sort of artificial body. It's infinitely better software than we could have imagined. But we were only just beginning to learn how, after all. They pumped me full of twentieth-century reflexes. The right moods, the right appetites, the right irrationalities, the right sort of combativeness. Somebody knows a lot about what it was like to be a twentieth-century man. (31)

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**Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous)**  
**Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103**  
**Department of English**

**Project Completion Certificate**

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Department of English



**Fabrics of Identity: Posthumanism in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* and Anand Gandhi's *Ship of Theseus***

Term Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
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Submitted by

Tathagata Sinha

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE(AUTONOMOUS),

NARENDRAPUR



## Fabrics of Identity: Posthumanism in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* and Anand Gandhi's *Ship of Theseus*

Posthumanism is a 'post' to the notion of 'human', which is located within the historical occurrence of 'humanism'(Ferrando 24). The concept of Humanism is founded on anthropocentrism and this anthropocentrism is founded upon another hierarchical construct based on specisist assumptions. This humanism sees human as singular, male and universal. It treats human as the center of the world, which is affected by the thoughts and actions of the human. In humanism, Human is an individual subject whose freedom for pursuing his choice, his self-consciousness and rationality, all are treated as signs of being human. However, this concept of human and humanism both as a result of dualism gives birth to the symbolic 'Others'. In the way of treating human as the center of everything, humanism has pushed these 'Others'(e.g. women, non-whites, homosexuals, animals, etc.) to the margins. Posthumanism rejects the idea of anthropocentrism and dualism. It also rejects the concept of human subjectivity and treats the human as plural. It focuses on decentering the human in relation to the non-humans. Posthumanism is an endeavour of deconstructing the 'human'. This very endeavour can be traced in Girish Karnad's play, *Hayavadana* and Anand Gandhi's film, *Ship of Theseus*.

Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* is a two-act play which starts with Bhagavata reciting verse for Lord Ganesha. Lord Ganesha is 'the *Vigneshwara*, the destroyer of obstacles, who removes all hurdles and crowns all endeavours with success' and has 'an elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and cracked belly' (Karnad 1). The Lord himself seems to be imperfect. But he is worshipped because he embodies purity, holiness and completeness. This is not only Bhagavata who can not figure out this mystery but it is the entire human rationality that is unable to unravel

a lot of mysteries all over the universe. The play includes a plot where Devadatta and Kapila's heads are mistakenly transposed by Devadatta's wife, Padmini. This transposition of the heads brings a problem of identity to them. They, in a way, fail to decide who Devadatta is and who Kapila is. Ultimately they take the help of a *rishi* and it is decided that the man who has the head of Devadatta is the real Devadatta. Though they give importance to the so-called *uttamanga* or the head as the superior part of the body, both Devadatta and Kapila eventually face problems in processing the memory that their body had possessed. In a conversation with padmini, Devadatta says:

DEVADATTA. You know, I'd always thought one had to use one's brains while wrestling fencing or swimming. But this body just doesn't wait for thoughts—it acts!

(Karnad 43)

Though, after a certain period of time their bodies get into the shape, the illusion of autonomy shatters. In a conversation with Padmini, Kapila says:

KAPILA. Yes, mine. One beats the body into shape, but one can't beat away the memories trapped in it. . . . memories which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened. (57)

*Ship of Theseus* starts with reminding the audience about the myth of Theseus' ship. From the very outset, Gandhi has addressed the question of human identity and individuality. However, the film has three plots dealing with the same theme of organ transplantation. One of the three plots tells a story of an erudite monk, Maitreya who believes in a religion which believes in practicing non-violence. Also, he is involved in animal rights activism. Add to that, he believes that every molecule in the universe is affected by our actions. He tries to be rational in his own

way of understanding the universe. After his physician finds that he has been suffering from liver cirrhosis, he is advised to take medications. But he denies because there is violence against animals behind the production of every medicine. But ultimately he realizes that his time of death hasn't yet come. So, he changes his decision and takes those medicines required for the transplantation process. He realizes this maybe because of that young lawyer, Charvaka. When Maitreya is ill and has decided to fast till death, Chakrava says:

You think you're a person but you're a colony. (*Ship of Theseus*

01:18:22 - 01:18:25)

In both the cases of *Hayavadana* and *Ship of Theseus*, human subjectivity seems to fail. In the introduction of *Hayavadana*, Kritinath Kurtkoti aptly writes that even the transposition of heads doesn't liberate the protagonists from the psychological limits imposed by nature. In an interview given to *Female First*, Anand Gandhi also says:

So the human being is not this sacred entity but it is has been colonised - but together the bacteria and the human genome make a collective entity which is the human body. I found this challenge to our notion of identity, individuality and who we are very very interesting (Helen 2012)

Though it's not all the humanity that is equal, but also the whole existence that is equal in his view, Maitreya's belief that every action and even inaction leaves a karmic mark on the whole universe, and his feeling of compassion about other life forms have been emerged from the belief that humans are unique and his/her choice of actions influences the world. This sense of influencing the world with choice of actions breaks apart when he faces mortality and has been pushed to change his decision. Aliya , the photographer girl is insecure about her authoritative

subjectivity of her work. She tries to have control over her art and denies to keep any photo which is intuitive. Her partner tries to convince her that she has not to be always consciously aware of her art because it can be sometimes intuitive. As the movie progresses she gets back her eyesight. And now she feels those pictures that were intuitive were actually good. And those new pictures that she has taken don't seem that good to her. But the fact is that she thought those new pictures were in her conscious control. There is a scene where the lense cap of her camera falls into the stream. And we realize that she has lost her intuitive sense of art. Again for another time, human subjectivity seems to be shattered.

The concept of identity is called into question in many cases. As each of the main characters of the film, *Ship of Theseus* is now living with someone else's organ and in the *play*, *Hayavadana*, the two friends are sharing their heads and bodies, everyone of them shares his or her identity with someone else at the same time. It's like Plutarch's paradox of Theseus's ship. According to P.K. Nayar, critical posthumanism sees human as an instantiation of networks of information (DNA, but also memories) and material (bacteria or viral forms) exchanges between systems and environments (Nayar 21). In other words, what we think as our autonomy is actually an endeavour of our system to regulate itself. Human always depends on its surroundings. So, the relation between human and nature is reciprocal and already existing. And the subjectivity is an 'emergent' condition, the outcome of continuous interactions. Charvaka puts it well when he reads out from that book of alphabets:

Our entire idea of free will down to the bin. One single small fungus

spore does that to an ant. You have trillions of bacteria in your body. How do you

know where you end...and where your environment begins? (*Ship of Theseus*

01:19:25-01:19:38)

Posthumanism emphasizes the rejection of absolute dualism, that is, oppositional binaries leading to hierarchical orderings. Hayavadana's mother, the princess of Karnataka chooses a great white stallion over a man. This does not only dislocate human from the center, but also it critiques the hierarchical orderings between human and other life forms. In *Hayavadana*, another kind of decentring the 'human' is seen. I have already discussed that the traditional human was always taken as male. Padmini has an agency in the plot of *Hayavadana*. She controls the plot as well as the lives of the two friends. Thus, she decenters the 'man' from the attention. Hayavadana also becomes a horse— a complete horse instead of being a complete human. He feels happy and proudly claims, "being a horse has its points." (Karnad 68)

When the characters in *Hayavadana* counters the hierarchical orderings, in *Ship of Theseus*, this absolutism is called into question by its characters. The European man who gets the stolen Kidney of Shankar feels the guilt but still accepts the kidney because otherwise he had to face death. The remarkable thing is that the European man's concept of India is that of the Orientalists. It is a fact that the West has constructed an image of the Orient to construct their own image as something superior. This Orientalism is fundamentally based on the idea of dualism. In this movie, the European man stereotypically thinks that in India people sell their kidneys for money. That's what always happens in India. As if that's why it is okay to take advantage of the needy people. In this connection we may recall what Edward W. Said has discussed in his book, *Orientalism*. He writes:

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective

notion identifying “us” Europeans as against all “those” nonEuropeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. (Said 7)

Navin, the stockbroker tries to get Shanker his kidney back. Though he fails in his attempt, the question of the European man's identity as superior and hegemonic is called into question.

In the late first century, historian, biographer and essayist, Plutarch proposed a thought experiment where a ship was replaced part by part. And he raised the question of whether a ship remains the same ship after the process of replacing the components is done. The same thing is evident in Anand Gandhi's film, *Ship of Theseus*. Gandhi ends his film by connecting the three plots. The acceptors of the organs are invited in a hall to watch a video clip captured by the donor, the cave explorer. This particular scene raises the question of whether the cave explorer is present in the hall or he is the hall. To some extent, so is the case of Karnad's *Hayavadana*. Both of the friends are Devadatta and none of them is Devadatta at the same time. If the sum of the parts makes the whole then how can we call the whole larger than the parts? ("Anand Gandhi: Why I Make Films", 00:02:25-00:02:35) There is a hierarchy between the whole and the parts and in this case, the views of Karnad and Gandhi are totally post-dualistic. This scene of the cave explorer's video clip is important from another aspect. In this very scene we witness a scene from the cave. The cave explorer's shadow is seen falling on the cave wall. He is holding a camera and a source of light is behind him. This particular scene reminds us of Plato's cave allegory. In Plato's cave allegory, the people who are chained represent the ignorant common men. And the men who have escaped and seen the outside of the cave, represent the philosophers who try to

enlighten the common men with their knowledge. So, the shackled men are the human beings.

They think whatever they know is ultimate, and their world(which is the cave) is everything.

This becomes a symbol of human ignorance about their own limits.

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**Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous)**  
**Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103**  
**Department of English**  
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Department of English

**Making Sense of the Self and the World: Absurdism and Existentialism in Albert  
Camus's *The Outsider* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis***

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Department of English

Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur. Kol: 700103.

## **Making Sense of the Self and the World: Absurdism and Existentialism in Albert Camus's *The Outsider* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis***

"Absurd" has been subjected to varied definitions. In Hazel Barnes's translation of *Being and Nothingness*, the Sartrean absurd is defined as

That which is meaningless. Thus man's existence is absurd because his contingency finds no external justification.

(Sartre, 628)

In his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) British dramatist Martin Esslin writes, "Absurd is that which has no purpose, no goal, or objective"(4). Albert Camus explains the notion of absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The absurd arrives with the perception that the world is not rational:

At this point of his effort man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and of reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.

(Camus,31-32)

In our simple life a situation is absurd when it includes an obvious discrepancy

between pretension or aspiration and reality. If anyone discovers himself or herself in an absurd situation, he will usually try to get rid of the situation by modifying his aspirations, or by removing himself or herself from the situation. But we are not always able to recover from a situation whose absurdity has become clear to us. Sometimes we feel that life is absurd. This feeling that life is absurd appears when we understand an aspiration or pretension which is inescapable from the expansion of human life and which makes it's absurdity inescapable from life itself. Meaningless and miserable life, inevitable futility of man's efforts, unbearable reality, no action for plot, comic and absurd situation etc. are the features of the absurd novels.

"Existentialism" has so many definitions. It can no longer be defined. It is better described as a tendency or attitude with a few doctrines common to all its exponents. Jean Paul Sartre himself says:

"The word existentialism...has been so stretched and has taken on so broad a meaning, that it no longer means anything at all.

(Sartre, 14)

Thomas Flynn, in the preface of *A Very Short Introduction to Existentialism*, suggests that "the mood of existentialism is one of enthusiasm, creativity, anguished self-analysis, and freedom"(Flynn,i). In his essay "Existence and Objectivity"(1925) the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel coined the term "Existentialism". The very term is

adopted by Sartre on October 29, 1945, while discussing his own existentialist position in a lecture in Paris. Existentialism was not born as an organized movement of any kind, but rather emerged as a trend in thought that came to characterize a new way of thinking in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Existentialism implies that rationality is not the only or primary mood of human understanding and relating to the world. Existentialism, in some ways, represents a shift in focus away from the idea of a goal-oriented philosophy. Humanism and Rationalism attempted to derive a pattern for the betterment of all of humanity. Existentialism, by comparison, tended to focus instead on the paradox and absurdity of existence— the human life awakening into an uncertain and often cruel world, essentially changed by a non-present force of necessity to try to make sense of the world, only to have all its progress and accomplishment taken away by the equally senseless fact of death. Absurdity, existence precedes essence, humanism, subjectivity, authenticity, freedom of choice, et cetera are the thematic characteristics of existential literature.

Albert Camus's *The Outsider* describes the life of a young European-Algerian named Meursault. The first line of *The Outsider*, "Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know"(9), tend to be interpreted as evident of Meursault's fatigued negligence to normal emotional and moral behaviour. Meursault's this statement is a direct result of the telegram sent by the retirement home where Mme Meursault had lived for the previous several years: "Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely. That doesn't mean anything. It may have been yesterday"(9). This passage

should make us aware of arriving too quickly at conclusions regarding the character of Meursault. In *The Metamorphosis*, as the central character Gregor Samsa was waking up from agitated dreams, he discovered that he had been transformed into a monstrous vermin in his bed. The novella begins with shocking prologue. From the outset of the novella Kafka wants to invite the readers to get into an unrealistic life that is covered by the man who is transformed into a monstrous Insect. Here Kafka tries to reveal the phenomenon of the absurdity of being.

In *The Outsider*, Meursault is the absurd hero for Camus. Meursault is devoid of the emotion that is perceived fundamental among all humans. He behaves in an unexpected manner. He doesn't lament immediately after the death of his mother. Meursault's unexpected behaviour bewilders the reader throughout the entire novel and what establishes the absurd is the uncommon choice of the protagonist between two different options in any circumstance. In *The Metamorphosis*, the absurdity of the world comes from an unchangeable and unspeakable process that is beyond the control of the protagonist and entirely changes his life. Gregor Samsa, the central character of *The Metamorphosis*, is a travelling salesman. He disdains his job. But he cannot leave his job because his parents took a debt from his boss. What bewilders the reader is that Samsa is not afraid of his transformation into a giant insect, rather he is worried about his employment. Like Meursault, the actions of Gregor are the main source of absurdity. Both Camus and Kafka explore the absurdity of the human condition in their texts.

During the trial Meursault says that “he hadn’t intended to kill the Arab” and that “it was because of the sun”. Meursault's this statement only give rise to laughter in the courtroom. But the magistrate wanted to know that why Meursault shot the lifeless body four more times. It is clear that this interests the magistrate far more than why Meursault shot the Arab the first time. The state prosecutor also neglects the actual crime of Meursault, rather he incriminates Meursault for being morally responsible for his mother’s death. Meursault was executed because of his failing to cry at his mother’s funeral as itself implying that the court had no good reason to try Meursault for killing an Arab. Meursault was killed for his social no-conformity, exemplified by his failure to express conventional grief after the death of his mother.

According to Camus, the absurd is produced via conflict, a conflict between our expectation of a rational , just universe and the actual universe that it is quite indifferent to all of our expectations.(Cline,).

In *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist Gregor Samsa observes that life is absurd because the world is unable to fulfil his expectations. Gregor's main concern is to make people aware of his helpless situation. But no one wants to understand his situation. He becomes a burden to his family members. As Gregor's sister instructs their parents to get rid of him, he asks a question to himself, “What now then?” This

question brings out the idea that his life is in the darkness and he has already lost his hope. In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka introduces two different types of characters which uncovers the absurd in the novella. On the one hand we notice the protagonist Gregor Samsa who is well aware of his transformation into a horrible vermin. But he is not worried about his transformation, rather he is more concerned about his job which he dislikes. His intention is to make people understand that nothing has happened to him and he will be fine soon. On the other hand we find another type of characters who are not willing to ask why Gregor has become like that. Their intention is to keep Gregor away from themselves and others. No one doesn't want to understand Gregor's situation. Finally Gregor discovers that his life is absurd because everyone wants to get rid of him and his death ends his absurdity.

The most important thematic characteristic of existentialism is 'existence precedes essence'. It takes precedence of existence over essence. It provides supreme priority on human being as conscious subject. In *The Outsider*, the character of Meursault can be analyzed as a conscious subject. He accepts the social norms but he never victimizes his sense of existence. For example, he doesn't believe in conventional marriage but he is willing to marry his girlfriend, Marie. We also see that Meursault states: "He then offered to bring me a cup of white coffee. I'm very fond of white coffee, so I accepted and he came back a few minutes later with a tray. I drank. I then wanted cigarette. But I hesitated because I didn't know if I could smoke in front mother. I thought it over, it really didn't matter. I offered the caretaker a cigarette and we smoked"



(Camus,14). Here we notice that drinking coffee and smoking cigarette go against the norms of society. But Meursault was unable to control himself which reveals his existence over essence.

In *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist Gregor Samsa suffers due to his failures to exist within the ideal established by the existential framework. Gregor fails to confront the world or even to defend his own existence. This results in his own annihilation. He is stripped of meaning and humanity. Gregor's basic failure is his ignorance of self-definition. He seeks to identify his existence not by searching within himself, but by the world around him. Thus Samsa becomes a failure and a victim to forces in the world around him.

Alienation is one of the most persistent themes of existential approach. In many of Kafka's writings the protagonists represent their own existential crisis being alienated from the world around themselves. In *The Metamorphosis*, before his transformation into an insect Gregor was an ideal son to his family members. But after his transformation he becomes a burden for his family members. His family members are ashamed to reveal his present condition to others. Thus, Gregor's alienation from the others becomes the primary source of his existential crisis. In *The Outsider*, the central character Meursault leads his life in his own way. Nothing can explain his activities and his thoughts. But the society is not driven by him. For this reason he is

alienated from the society. For his alienation from the society and social institutions he is unable to understand the other people of society. Thus, alienation becomes one of the prime reasons of Meursault's existential crisis.

Communication is another important source of existential ideal. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor's inability to communicate with the others is the prime source of his difficulties at the beginning of the story. He tries to communicate with body language throughout the entire story, but in most cases, it fails to communicate him with the others. Another important source of existential thought is the look. The idea is based on the idea that something as simple as being conscious of being observed by another creature, whether human or animal, has a profound effect on the way the receiver of that look perceives his or her environment. This idea is relevant in *The Metamorphosis*. The sister's affection that Gregor covets almost more than anything else can be considered a look of approval. This idea is also applicable to Gregor and his family's fear of being judged by the society. Thus, the idea of social judgement is central to the entire story. The world is irrational. This notion is also one of the main sources of the existential framework. Gregor's transformation is a potential interpretation of this idea. Gregor's transformation into a hideous creature and the rectified reactions of Gregor and his family members are surreal. Kafka doesn't make any attempt to illustrate the gross transformation of Samsa's body, rather encourages the reader to accept it— the acceptance of the absurd, the irrational.

Therefore, the idea of absurdity and the existential crisis are evident in these two novels. Both *The Outsider* by Albert Camus and *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka deal with the absurdity of the human condition. Both Camus and Kafka vindicate the unsettling crisis of the existence of their absurd heroes in their novels. The two protagonists of the aforementioned novels, Meursault and Gregor Samsa, are unable to make sense of themselves and the world. Thus, "Absurdism" and "Existentialism" are vividly manifested in *The Outsider* by Albert Camus and *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka.

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