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TRAGIC





# THE TRAGIC VISION

RAZI ABEDI

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#### INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century found itself in a very difficult situation. Chaos, confusion and despondency were the legacies that it received from the preceding age. The old cherished beliefs and settled values which had been seriously challenged by the 19th century had now started crumbling down. The Wasteland was the final dirge of the old world given to decay and corruption. The disillusionment that followed the French Revolution and the first spurt of romanticism in England culminated in the utter despair of the years between the two World Wars, which also witnessed economic depression, social delinquency and the cult of ugliness epitomized in the 'heroes' of the modem world like Prufrock. The capitalist system had totally destroyed the social fabric: the value structure raised on the basis of capitalism, further aggravated by a misinterpretation of the Darwinian theory of the mutation of species as the principle of the survival of the fittest and seeking support for its theoretical assumptions in Newtonian mechanics, was threatening total dissolution of the Western civilization. This line of thinking culminated in Golding's The Lord of the Flies. which attributed the ills of the modern western society to the essential depravity of human nature. Europe confirmed the opinion by honouring Golding with the Nobel prize.

The ugliness of the western civilization could no more be concealed in convenient, masks, or dismissed as something not worthy of notice. The Victorians could shut their eyes to the whole filth and mire. Their "time was like the level plain where men lose their belief in volcanoes and earthquakes, thinking tomorrow will be yesterday, and the giant forces that used to shake the earth, are for ever laid to

sleep." Prufrock finds that no mask will conceal the real ugliness of his face.

Behind the thinking of T.S. Eliot and Golding operates a very immature and negative philosophy. Eliot had found Shakespeare to be inferior to Dante, as he wrote. "the thought behind (Dante) is the thought of a man as great and as lovely as Dante himself; St. Thomas. The thought behind Shakespeare is of men far inferior to Shakespeare himself.... a Montaigne, a Machievalli or a Seneca. Spengler is the genius behind Eliot. Golding and the like and the Gospel behind them is The Decline of the West. Instead of a 'coherent system of thought' it is only chaos that forms the background of all their cogitations and consequent apprehensions. To the vague fears of those intellectuals were also added the real dangers of the red revolution which, aroused by Glimpse into Darkness of Hermann Hesse, turns the 'sound high in the air' into 'Murmur of maternal lamentation', and inspires the fear of 'those hooded hordes swarming/Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth/Ringed by the flat horizon only. The weird atmosphere is made still more lurid by 'red sullen faces' that 'sneer and snarl/From doors of muderacked houses'.

But the 19th century mood was basically interrogative. Though at times they were critical of their age, as a general rule they never bothered to answer the questions raised by their criticism. No doubt there were honest and bold writers like George Eliot, who studied and analyzed the situation as best as they could, and though the conclusion was that the situation of man was utterly and essentially tragic, they did not shrink from their explorative efforts. It was left for the 20th century to provide answers to these *overwhelming* questions, which a Prufrock could not confront. Apart from shrinking into the most convenient ruse of original sin by many there were those who came up with their answers to the situation. The first serious attempt in fiction was made by Conrad who, in *Lord Jim*, took up the theme of Hamlet,

without the securities of a value system which were available to the prince of Denmark. Conrad visualized the state of man in utter isolation, condemned to a world of alienation, and struggling hard to come to some understanding with himself and quietly arriving at the conclusion that the old humanism was no more valid. But he too evaded a direct statement.

Conrad changed the dramatic situation into fiction. He had confessed to Galsworthy that theatre frightened him. Referring to his adaptation of The Secret Agent for the stage he admitted: "In writing the novel I had veiled the plot to some extent by all those elements which go to make a book. I had to get to the bare bones of the story in making my play." The dramatists took up the subject with greater courage and honesty, though the prospects were altogether bleak to some of them. The absurdists, particularly, found the situation absolutely hopeless. They experienced alienation which, carried to an extreme, made everything look meaningless. But then the absurdists themselves were uprooted and displaced persons, coming to the alien world of Paris from their native lands in Romania, Ireland or Russia. They found themselves in a world where they lived but to which they did not belong. They universalized their alienation and made a philosophy of it.

Others extracted from the absurdity of their situation a meaning of their own. They, like Sartre, rejected the idealistic belief that man being an essential part of nature derived his essence from it. They asserted that man created his essence by acting through free choice. He turned anxiety into action and created being out of nothingness and emphasised authentic existence. Gorky, on the other hand, found this authenticity not in the individual but in the community. He advocated collective action based on firm belief in man's capacity and desire to change the world. He believed that private property was the greatest enemy of man. It was the real culprit which had made the suffering of man of the state of the suffering of man of the suffering of the s

much tragic as ridiculous. He advocated a new humanism, the socialist humanism, to replace the bourgeois humanism. He demonstrated through his plays that the capitalist system created alienation and reduced human beings to mere objects, either instruments to run the system or commodities to be traded in the market.

Lorca and Brecht sought the lost man in folk-lore and in the conventions of life lived at the lowest levels. Both found man to be basically noble, but deluded and distracted by the demands of a highly contrived society. Lorca's demands of the blood and Brecht's compulsions of the economic forces may appear to be two irreconcilable attitudes to the drama of life, but they are only two sides of the same picture. Frustrated passion turns into bad blood and pollutes life. Poverty causes suffering which is turned into a trade thus abjectly demeaning man. To both theatre was a commitment. It existed and worked for the liberation and education of consciousness. Both the writers worked with great revolutionary struggles in the background in their respective countries and both held an unequivocal position towards the struggle without any reservations. Though their approach and method had much similarity, ironically, they met very different fates. While Brecht lived to watch the complexities generated by a successful revolution, Lorca fell victim to a struggle that ended tragically.

The frustrations and anxieties of Europe no longer remained confined to the continent torn by wars and ideological conflicts. Soon the apprehensions reverberated across the Atlantic. Albee found the superficial calm and complacency of the American society seriously threatened by the ghosts of confusion, distress and blatant aggression. The three points of prestige of the American society, liberty, private property and the family, were losing credibility. Hypocrisy, falsehood and self-deception had replaced faith and confidence. The jungle of American capitalist society was turned into a zoo in order to save each from the onslaught of the other.

The fabric of the society is no more woven by common interests. It is a community held together by mutual fear. The American dream is turned into the zoo story: birds of pray have become the birds of prey and ruthless competition is the order of the day that cannot distinguish between the hero and the dandy and where science and history are used to widen the gulf between man and man instead of narrowing it or trying to bridge it.

We thus see that the West was caught in a desperate situation and there appeared to be no possible way out. Cracks had appeared in the Western civilization as far back as the Renaissance and have now thrown it into absolute confusion and an irretrievably hopeless state of disintegration. Dogma had been questioned and is almost thrown off, scientific enquiries have been pursued with zeal and then results accepted without much grudge. Advancement in technology broke new barriers and man has confidently embarked on his way to a rediscovery of his own being and a redefinition of his world. Stage was the most appropriate medium to project this drama of life, and no wonder that this age became the greatest age of Drama since Shakespeare. It is for this reason that an attempt has been made in the following pages to understand the various trends of thought and the new techniques developed to deal with them in modern Western literature. Drama has been chosen as the most suitable genre for the study of current literary movements in the advanced countries of the world.

Another, and a more specific purpose behind these studies, is to explore the background of these literary movements since these have considerably influenced the writers and the readers in the East. Surrealism, symbolism, folklore and mythology have become very popular in our literature as techniques. Absurd has also become almost a craze. But, since people in general are not aware of the geneses of these new trends they cannot appreciate their significance and blindly tag them to their own literature, where it

hardly fits. Western society is a disintegrating society while ours is a decaying one. The situation of a disintegrating society is not relevant to a decaying society. Nothing has changed in our world and nothing broken. This decaying world has not yet been seriously challenged. The issues of a highly industrialised society cannot be the issues of a predominantly feudal society. We are not in a state of revolution either. There is no war of liberation and there is no struggle against colonialism or even an attempt to change the class structure of the society. Our situation has no similarities with the situation prevailing in the industrial countries or in the nations where a war of liberation is being waged. We are fighting neither nature nor man-made institutions. We have no use for symbols since the stark naked reality around us is profounder than symbols. We will derive no benefit from going to mythology or Dastans (tales and romances) since we are still living in a world which is not much different from the world of myths and Dastans, We have not even leisure enough to indulge in the niceties of technique.

I hope these studies in modern Western drama will be viewed in a Pakistani context, with reference to the impact of modern Western thought on Eastern sensibility.

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# ANTI- ARISTOTELIAN POETICS OF BRECHT

Brecht once claimed to be the Einstein of the New Stage Form 1 By this he meant that as Einstein had overthrown the geometry of Euclid, similarly he had replaced the Poetics of Aristotle with a theory of his own. Brecht has not only given a new form to drama, but has also presented the new world-view which has created the new dramatic form. Aristotle's Poetics itself was a study of the form of drama and an analysis of its various elements. But he too clearly stated the world-view which operated behind this form. This view was derived from the Mimetic theory of which the salient features were: (1) the universe is a well-ordered and permanent system: (2) suffering is an important constituent of this system; and (3) suffering can be directed into other channels, or sublimated, but it cannot be eliminated.

Thus, according to this theory of imitation, the status of the fine arts was determined as : (1) art sees the reality behind the appearances of life: (2) by presenting true pictures of misery and suffering the artist reveals their real form. He thus brings to people an awareness of suffering so that they may lighten their burden of misfortunes through this awareness; and (3) this not only restores the mental health of the individuals, but also brings balance to the society and makes it healthy.

Brecht rejected this world-view and this theory of art. To him the one fact of life is that it is no permanent fact. Rather it is a sequence of changing situations. There is nothing permanent or final about it, as Brecht observes: 'When something seems the most obvious thing in the world, it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up." 2 Thus, suffering too is not permanent. It is a creation of the processes of life. If it is accepted that suffering is a product of the ever-changing processes of life, then practically it can be eliminated, or controlled and manipulated. With this assumption the tenets of art automatically change. Art is no more seen as presenting any permanent reality. Its subject is not permanence, but change. Drama, therefore, should depict how life changes, and invite the spectator to think how life can be changed, can be controlled; "in an age of great discoveries and inventions one must have a certain inclination to penetrate deeper into things—a desire to make things controlable." 3

Aristotle defined Tragedy as an imitation of action: "Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action. . . In a play accordingly they do not act in order to portray character; they include the character for the sake of the action." The tragedian first conceives an action. Action, to Aristotle, had a definite form and tragedy showed how to master the tragic situation — through catharsis. Man was thus enabled to endure his suffering. There was no concept of getting rid of it. Aristotle considers it sufficient to create an awareness of suffering and believes in mitigating the pain through this awareness. It is enough to project suffering and strengthen men's belief in its inevitability. For thousands of years man has been taught to come to terms with suffering, to accept it.

The man of Aristotle's day accepted it. Oedipus accepts his suffering and makes a compromise with it. Shakespeare's Hamlet does not. He suffers but does not submit. The conflict between the knowledge of the fact and not submitting to it creates in him an excruciating tension. Shakespeare belongs to a different time. His age is different from Aristotle's age. His hero does not know how to confront his suffering. He cannot escape it and at the same time he cannot accept it as inevitable. But how should he get rid of it? He cannot decide. It is for this reason that when ultimately awareness comes to him, as suffering makes him wiser, a Shakespearean hero dies in the end. He has no other option. Life offers him nothing, since to relive the same given life with a new awareness is meaningless. On the contrary, the hero of a Greek Tragedy does not necessarily die, though

according to Aristotle, the critics are wrong who blame Euripides for giving many of his plays an unhappy ending, for it is not the pleasure of tragedy when "the bitterest enemies in the piece (e.g. Orestes and Agisthus) walk off as good friends at the end, with no slaying of any one by any one." 5 Thus, Oedipus gouges his eyes, but still lives on. In Aristotle's age life was settled and their ideal was a balanced living. Excesses were not tolerated and, when committed, created tragedy. There was a clear vision behind this attitude, an accepted world view, which was no more possible in subsequent ages. Signs of turmoil had, however, started becoming visible, as these are reflected in the plays of Euripides in deviating from the convention and making fun of the accepted norms, picking up his heroes from common folks instead of from gods, kings and the warriors. Aristophanes censures Euripides for this: 'Euripides is to him a bad citizen and a bad poet. . . He is the spirit of the age personified. with its restlessness, its scepticism, its sentimentalism its unsparing questioning of old traditions, of religious usages and civic loyalty; its frivolous disputations, which unfit men for the practical work of life, its lowered ideal of courage and patriotism'.6

The days of Aeschylus had already been left far behind when the dramatist beautifully and convincingly succeeded in striking a compromise between the conflicting demands of the matriarchal and the patriarchal systems, and thus converting the curse on the house of Atreus into a blessing. Aristotle viewed this social, moral and aesthetic deterioration with concern; and perhaps it was this concern which prompted him to challenge the aesthetic theory of Plato in order to rehabilitate the artist and get for him his due place in the society so that he may restore its balance and strengthen it. It was under such apprehensions that Aristotle wanted to use the talent of the artist in stabilizing the society. Brecht wants to use this talent to change the society.

The ancient tragedian brought out the meaning of suffering by showing it on the stage, and strengthened the

spectators' belief in its reality and inevitability. Though Shakespeare could not strengthen this belief in suffering, he did project it in its various forms, and this prepared men to face it and endure it, to live with it. He presented suffering and made men aware of it. Brecht goes beyond just awareness. He tries to seek through art the ways of eliminating suffering. He believed that suffering is not man's destiny. It is a practical proposition. In fact, as seen by Brecht, it is a trade, and is controlled by the laws of supply and demand. The Three Penny Opera shows such a trading establishment dealing in human misery. Beggary is chosen as the symbol. Areas of business and licences are sold and bought on business terms. The entire society is directly or indirectly involved in the transactions. There is Peechum, the proprietor of this establishment of beggars. His accomplices-in-trade are some prostitutes, a big capitalist, a police officer and some gangsters. There are, of course, the beggars; needy helpless and crippled persons, and the people who are moved to give alms. The machinery of the state, the commercial interests, the institutions of morality, piety and human sympathy, and, not the least, the social outcasts, all collaborate in this commonest of human trades in human societies. It is in fact a whole system that creates, sustains and promotes beggary. The victims of the system are themselves converted into its agents. The prostitutes and the bad characters are not helped to socially rehabilitate themselves. They are further, and irrevocably, alienated from the society. The only occupation left to them is to make the virtue of necessity. and sell their misery, prostituting it in the market. The society creates the disabled, the delinquent and the cripple, and extracts benefits out of them. Peecham has developed begging into a science. 'You see, my business is trying to arouse pity', says he. But his main problem is that 'Human beings have the horrid capacity of being able to make themselves heartless at will'. 7 Consequently, even the most effective methods do not work if used too often. It is true both of physical disability and spiritual appeals.

Suffering is thus converted into a commodity which the beggar exploits to his benefit, compelled by need. In the same way a philosopher exploits it, as did Aristotle to restore individual and social balance. But the philosopher brings dignity to the trade by clothing his statements in the aweinspiring terminology of his trade. Business is a mundane affair, and has always been considered the occupation of the less dignified. Therefore, to talk of business in the language of business is embarrassing to a man who has pretentions to the highest ideals of morality and human dignity. Talking of business in the language of business exposes the petty mundane object of business. There is no virtuosity left in it. One of the reasons that Galileo gives of the displeasure of the rulers against him is that he had written a book on heavenly bodies in the language of the market place. In a commercial society even scholarship and knowledge become commodites. Only, these are offered in better coverings, packed impressively. These are clothed in a mysterious language that inspires confidence and respect in the eyes of the people. A book on scholarly subjects could only be written in Latin. Vernacular hurts its dignity. When the Philosopher, in The Life of Galileo, quotes Aristotle in Latin, Galileo asks him to speak in the vernacular, as the lens grinder present there did not know Latin. The Philosopher protests: "The argument will lose in elegance" Reluctantly he concedes. But by his high-flown vernacular he manages to make the language as abstract and unintelligible as a foreign language: 'The cosmos of divine Aristotle, with its mystical, music-making and crystal domes and the gyrations of its heavenly bodies and the oblique angle of the sun's orbit and the satellite tables and the rich catalogue of constellations in the southern hemisphere and the inspired construction of the celestial globe is a conception of such symmetry and beauty that we should do well to hesitate before disturbing that harmony.'8 Brecht's poetics envisages a drama which shows the various exploitative and coercive institutions of the society and their tactics, so as to counter them. Knowledge is a dangerous commodity and must not go in wrong hands, since, as Brecht

puts it, "There is not much knowledge that leads to power, but plenty of knowledge to which only power can lead." So the monopoly of knowledge becomes a serious object, which is the secret behind all this elegance and dignity of speech. It must never go to the have-nots. In this age of science and technology, technology in some form may be transmitted, but never science. Beside technical considerations there are also much deeper reasons of keeping it from those who most need it. Thus Galileo must not be allowed to expose common people to knowledge, which may prompt them to think, and this may distract them from the path of righteousness. The Brahamins of ancient India used to pour molten lead into the ears of the low caste if they ever happened to have a word of the holy books pass through them. They could not afford a knowledge that would change anything. Brecht's theory proposes an instructive theatre. For Aristotle it was mimetic.

A more serious charge against Galileo was that he had rejected the Ptolemic cosmology and advocated in favour of the Copernican system. He was trying to spread a knowledge that would shake the entire medieval social and emotional edifice. The rulers were not prepared to allow this revolutionary role to knowledge. It was safe to stick to the authority of Aristotle. Only traditional sanctions could preserve the age-old system that was patronised and adopted by the Church. They preached that knowledge was an accomplishment, a mental culture and enlightenment. Brecht, on the other hand, believed that the study of science for the sake of science could bring very inhuman consequences to man. The Inquisition was aware of the consequences of scientific progress, and they knew to what conclusions science may lead man. It was for this reason that they wanted science to remain subservient to the Church. They wanted to derive only desired results from scientific investigations. Thus, when Galileo presents his telescope to the authorities, he talks of its utility, expecting a handsome reward. The Curator of the University of Padua, in The Life of Galileo, presents this invention to the Senators on behalf of Galileo, and explains to them its uses in commerce and

war. Commerce and war are extremely important to the government. But the social and moral implications of scientific progress entail great risks. Vested interests seek only a static world with increased economic opportunity - a very unreasonable but nonetheless practically feasible proposition. Galileo must invent the telescope and observe the heavens through it, but he must not say that the earth moves, as the Little Monk says: 'I grew up a son of peasants in the Campagna. . . They are not rich, but even in their misfortune there lies concealed a certain invisible order of things . . . . They have been assured that the eye of God rests upon them . . . . that the whole universe has been built up round them in order that they, the actors, can play their greater or lesser parts. What would my people say if they learned from me that they were really on a little bit of rock that ceaselessly revolves in empty space round another star? . . . Why is such patience, such acceptance of their misery, either necessary or good today?... There is no meaning in our misery; hunger is simply not having eaten, and not a test of strength". 10 Thus would people be forced to think why there is so much want in a world so replenished, why is there so much hunger; why such human misery; why is man so crushed and so deprived with all the bounty of God around him. The medieval Church, which had itself become greed and lechery personified, would lose face before this awareness. Galileo is therefore forced to pronounce that the earth did not move. The Church insists to retain Aristotelian world-view even after the invention of the telescope. But the irony of ironies is that the Church is scientific in realizing the social consequences of research; it is only the scientist who pronounces against them. This is because detached from life science becomes unscientific. The Church sees science in its bearing upon life while Galileo is interested in science for the sake of science. It is at a later stage that Galileo's conscience of the scientist reacts and forces him to say to Sarti. his young pupil: 'could we deny ourselves to the crowd and still remain scientists? The movements of the stars have become clearer; but to the mass of the people the movements

of their masters are incalculable. . . If scientists, intimidated by slef-seeking people in power, are content to amass knowledge for the sake of knowledge, then science can become crippled, and your new machines will represent nothing but new means of oppression. With time you may discover all that is to be discovered, and your progress will only be a progress away from mankind. The gulf between you and them can one day become so great that your cry of jubilation over some new achievement may be answered by a universal cry of horror." <sup>11</sup> Commenting on this, Brecht adds: 'The Atom Bomb is, both as a technical and as a social phenomenon, the classical end-product of his (Galileo's) contribution to science and his failure to society. <sup>12</sup> This is the new concept and role of knowledge determined by the new world-view which is upheld and projected by Brecht.

Brecht thus believes the function of art to project new ideas in order to change the society: not like Aristotle, to stablize it, by revealing and imitating the permanent behind the changing appearances. To Aristotle's mimetic theory Brecht opposes his dialectical approach.

With life seen as a state of flux, virtue is no more conceived as anything absolute or definite. It turns into evil in a decadant society, and even bad people could do good deeds. The Good Woman of Sezwan presents this idea in the form of an allegory which shows three gods descending upon a very bad society. Nobody is prepared to host them except a woman, who is a prostitute, a social reject. But, that corrupt people of a corrupt society may be noble, is an experience of Brecht's age. It was not possible to Aristotle, who makes goodness the first and the foremost point in the tragic character, and his concept of goodness is, like his whole aesthetic theory, primarily social: "Since Tragedy is an imitation of persons who are above the common level."13 Here, in Brecht, what is more significant is that he views it not simply as the question of the goodness of the character. Rather the whole concept of the noble and the ignoble has been thrown into confusion. The gods reward 'the good woman', the prostitute, for her goodness. As soon as her

fortunes improve a little, the hungry, the deprived, the old, the debtor, the unemployed, the sick and the disabled run to her for help and force hospitality upon her. Her life is made extremely miserable. She at last creates an imaginery cousin, who is very merciless. She is divided within. As the cousin, she is rude and cruel, but in her real form she is sympathetic and helpful. Economic disparity, according to Brecht, renders goodness impossible, and breaks man's consciousness to pieces. With such a corrupted consciousness, when the oppressed get an opportunity they would not spare even their benefactor, and would prove still worse exploiters and oppressors.

Aristotle's stage had developed from the altar. It dealt with an experience close to the religious experience. Brecht's stage is a vehicle of the political issues of his day. This changes the very subject of drama, and along with it comes a change in its form. This is reflected in his 'idea of complex seeing.' 14

The idea of complex seeing is the subject of The Caucasian Chalk Circle, On the one side is the emotional attachment of people to their land, and on the other, the need to develop the land for the greater prosperity of the people. They would not allow a dam to inundate the sacred inheritance of their forefathers. They are afraid of the new and desparately cling to the old. This also raises the question of ownership. The land belongs to some. But the benefit of irrigation will not only come to them, the owners: it will come to a lot many others. The good of a group has no priority over the larger good of the community. The issue then is, to whom does the land belong? To the one who just owns it, or to him who tills it. This is the prologue to the play. But the same question is the subject of the main story where the claims of the mother to her son, simply because she has given him birth, are rejected in favour of the claims of the nurse who has brought up the child. The play concludes with the lines:

That what there is shall belong to those who are good

for it, thus:

The children to the maternal, that they thrive

The carriages to good drivers, that they can drive well; And the valley to the waterers, that it shall bear fruit.

Aristotle had also stated as much when he rejected mere quality as of any significance. In his words, "Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions — what we do — that we are happy or reverse." Rights are not personal property. Only he has the right who makes use of it in a sympathetic and humane way.

Brecht's main thesis seems to be the rejection of a system which reduces man to commodity, and in which his happiness and misery become items for trade. *Mother Courage and Her Children* is another attempt to illustrate this thesis. It is anti-war play in which war is shown as a commercial interest prompted by sectarian animosity. It is a petty selfish affair and no ground for any heroism.

The old woman in the play loses all her children and her horse in the war. She herself drags her carriage, which is her mobile shop, and sells small articles from village to village. The war has given her nothing but deprivation, poverty and misery. Still she is apprehensive that the war may not come to an end and harm her business. In a commercial world man is reduced to a commercial proposition and is unable to forge ahead in any direction beyond immediate business interest. The whole play is concerned with war, specially with its economic consequences. The war trings many benefits: it creates heroes, shakes and awakens the nation and produces new economic opportunities. But it kills too. Do people learn anything from the devastation that war brings upon man? Brecht comments:

Mother Courage recognizes, as do her friends and guests and nearly everyone, the purely commercial character of the war: this is precisely what attracts her. She believes in the war to the end. It never occurs to her that one must have a big pair of scissors to take one's cut out of war.

Then, in a very strong denunciatory tone, he continues:

Those who look on catastrophes wrongly expect those involved to learn something. So long as the masses are the *objects* of politics they cannot regard what happens to them as an experiment but only as a fate. They learn as little from catastrophe as a scientist's rabbit learns of biology. 16

Brecht believes that the function of art is to protest against oppression, not just to depict suffering and sacrifice as gestures to higher living. He opposes all forms of oppression, no matter from right or left. When there was an uprising on the border of East and West Berlin in 1953, Brecht wrote, in *The Solution:*—

After the uprising of June 17th
The Secretary of the writers' Union
Had handbills distributed on Stalin Boulevard
On which it said that the populace
Had lost the confidence of the government
And could regain it only by doubling
Its output. In view of this would it be
Not simple if government
Dissolved the populace and elected
Another people. 17

Similarly, in another poem, Au Die Nachge-Borenen? he observed :

For we know only too well:
Even the hatred of squaler
Makes the brow grow stern
Even anger against injustice
Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
Could not ourselves be kind. 18

Brecht was awarded Lenin's Peace Prize in 1954.

It is human good, above everything else, towards which all our energies must be directed. There is no concept of the hero in Brecht. Good and evil, according to him, are social phenomena, not directly emanating from the individuals. The society which lacks the capacity to improve itself looks for the hero. Similarly he has a very different concept of sacrifice. He believes that as a bad society needs heroes, so a

bad life demands sacrifices.

There are no heroes in the plays of Brecht, neither are there any unusual happenings. His subjects are the ordinary everyday difficulties and problems of common people. He would not agree with the writer who will confine evil to specific people and to particular localities. Such a writer is surely honoured by the government, and is admired too. He becomes rich because he gets paid for having arrested evil and for convincing the people that evil is not permeated through the society, that it is not a part of its texture. This brings a two-fold advantage. On the one hand, the concept of the hero and, on the other, the identification of the bad characters gives the society a feeling of security. For a good society produces heroes, or waits for them; and if evil is to be avoided beware of the bad characters and have no truck with them. In other words: you are not capable of good deeds, and you are not bad either. How secure man feels in such ideas, and how elevated! These illusions are a great source of strength.

He has similar views about martyrdom. To him martyrdom is no individual act. It is collective endeavour. It has a social significance, since though the martyr has done his job, now it is our concern, we, who are not martyred. Brecht thus concludes that to allow oneself to be destroyed by oppression, lethargy or opportunism is a sin against life. To Brecht life is a challenge that determines everybody's worth. The final result is not known. Thus tragedy or catastrophe can take any form. It may not be even inevitable. To Aristotle, and after him to Shakespeare, tragedy was inevitable, and it was caused by change in the circumstances. Brecht expects the dramatist to show that man is capable of changing his circumstances. Brecht suggests how to make the change possible. According to Aristotle and Shakespeare, on the other hand, drama shows how man confronts his circumstances.

Brecht raises certain questions through his plays. For that matter, *HAMLET* too is in interrogative mood. <sup>19</sup> But there is a difference. Shakespeare does not expect his spectators to offer answers to the questions raised by him.

To him all these questions are of a permanent, rather eternal, nature, which man always confronts. Brecht invites the spectator to answer the questions raised by him, not speculatively, but directly, right there, within the play. Here Brecht makes another technical departure from Aristotle. It is not the object of the playwright to establish an identification between the spectator and the hero of the play so as to make the spectator completely lose himself in the hero's situation. The object of Brecht's drama is that the spectator should rise above the situation presented on the stage and consider it objectively. He should ponder upon the issues - not through emotional involvement, not subjectively, but dispassionately and with a tranquil and detached mind. To achieve this objectivity, the dramatist must resort to technical innovations with the help of which the spectator may be checked from getting lost in the spectacle and deluded or implicated by it. Brecht calls these technical devices 'Alienation Effects. According to Aristotle the interest of the spectator in a play is secured through identification, where he loses himself in the situation of the hero, drawing vicarious pleasure that results in catharsis. Brecht believes in creating the desired tragic effect through alienation instead of identification.

Many devices have been used by Brecht to achieve this alienation effect. In the first place, he has violated the time and space sequence. It is not essential that events should follow a chronological order. A sudden break in the sequence gives a jolt to the spectator and forces him to take stock of the situation and to ponder upon the action presented on the stage. Moreover, the stage creates an illusion. As soon as we accept the existence of the stage we suspend disbelief and are prepared to give credence to many things. Sometimes we accept the stage as a desert, sometimes as a garden, at another occasion it may represent the home and in the following scene the office. It is at one time a club, and at another a battlefield. Similarly we accept the illusion of events. When a murder is shown on the stage, we accept it as

murder, though we are sure that it is not real murder, since if even for a moment we believe it to be actual murder, many will run out of the theatre in panic. Brecht thinks that this illusion is unnecessary; rather he considers it to be against the real object of drama, which, according to him, is to help spectator to take an objective view of the situation presented. The events following a sequence may have a lulling effect on the spectators' mind, while Brecht wants to shake them, to arouse them.

Brecht's other departure from Aristotle is that he insisted to write epic drama. He introduced the narrative element in drama, which according to Aristotle is the manner of epic. This was made possible with the help of advanced stage techniques. The stage could tell a story. This was also helped by the varied interests of modern man in the most complex and diverse problems of the present living. Brecht observed.'

Oil, inflation,war, social struggle, the family religion, wheat, the meat market, all became subject for theatrical representation. Choruses enlightened the spectator about facts unknown to him. Films showed a montage of events from all over the world. Projections added statistical material. And as the 'background' came to the front of the stage so people's activity was subjected to criticism. Right and wrong courses of action were shown. People were shown who knew what they were doing, and others who did not. The theatre became an affair for philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished not just to explain the world but also to change it. <sup>20</sup>

Brecht abandoned strict adherence to the use of unities and dialogue in drama and called it epic drama, which combined some characteristics of drama with the elements peculiar to epic. In an epic every scene is complete in itself and quite distinct from the others and independent of them. Each scene in a drama is organically related to the other

scenes and is dependent for its meaning on the entire play. Each scene in an epic drama is a complete unit, and is not an organic constituent of the rest of the drama. In other words, epic drama has no linear action, rather it proceeds intermittently and with jolts. Instead of the logical sequence, there is a flow of impressionistic feelings in it. Each scene leaves its own impression and the main impact of the play is the cumulative impression of all the separate scenes. This is close to the everyday experience of life. Life follows no logic. From morning till evening a man passes through varied, even mutually contradictory, experiences. It means that a logical representation of the illogical reality of life is unrealistic and artificial. It is unnatural. This form of oblique narration is a prominent feature of modern literature. Eliot found Donne closer to the modern age in sensibility and poetic technique. In his opinion Donne's poetry does not impose any arbitrary logic upon life and this he achieves by omitting important contextual or syntactical connections. In the words of T.S. Eliot:

"It appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. Hence we get something which looks very much like the conceit."<sup>21</sup>

Eliot has used this technique in his poems. He has tried to communicate his experience through impressions which appear to be irrelevant to one another. A patient etherized upon the table, the spreading shadows of the evening, cheap restaurants, dirty winding streets, men and women engaged in small talk, all get huddled and mixed up in the poem. This brings two technical advantages. The one is that since the writer has not imposed an arbitrary order upon the events and has not given them any specific slant.

the reader is made to think over and over again in order to create a meaning of these for himself. In this way he is not lost in the poetry, but struggles for the meaning. Also, according to the modern writer, literature is not mere entertainment. Rather it is an effort to comprehend life. It represents an attitude to life, in the same way as there is an economic approach, a religious approach, a business approach or a scientist's approach. As all these approaches require a detached study of life, so does art. Therefore the second advantage of this technique is that the reader is never allowed to be taken in, to be enchanted, since it requires a mental agility' on the part of the reader to comprehend such a disjointed description of an experience. Since the writer takes his business seriously and his approach is explorative, he would try to keep the reader alert and awake to the issue in hand. To this end he uses techniques which surprise and give a jolt to attention. This is what Brecht means by alienation effect.

Still another advantage of this technique is that it makes natural and realistic communication possible by keeping scenes independent of one another. Various scenes become so many symbols in the play, in the same way as symbols are used in a poem. The meaning of a poetic image is restricted by the context; for example, when the rose is used as an image, some one of its aspects will be used as a reference, such as, "delicate like a rose" or "fragrant like a rose". But a rose has also a complete existence of its own, and with its so many aspects. It has thorns as well. So are there the shoots, the branches and the roots. Then there is the earth in which it grows. It is frail and exposed to the winds and the storm. Used as a symbol all these associations can be utilized only when it is presented as a rose without any specific context. Thus, when Eliot's Prufrock compares himself to Hamlet, he does not mean a comparison with any one aspect or trait of Hamlet. It is not any one issue or situation in the play or in the character to which a reference is intended. Eliot alludes to the total personality of Hamlet, to all the problems confronted by him; in fact to the entire

play Hamlet. Images in Eliot are therefore not so much metaphors as allusions. Similarly Brecht is of the opinion that if the various scenes of a drama are kept independent of one another, each will communicate its meaning fully. Another advantage will be that in this way the dramatist will be spared the inevitability of the conventional theatre, that of imposing his thought upon the spectator. He leaves it to the spectators to relate various scenes to one another and deduce the meaning of the play for themselves. Brecht compels the spectator to think. To him life poses a challenge to everyone to face the issues of existence for himself.

According to Brecht a play is like a well argued case in a court of law, and it should be as convincing as a legal argument. Brecht uses the Theatre of Instruction for training the spectators to make their own conclusions about the problems of life. It is for this reason that the plot does not progressively develop in a play of Brecht. Its plot is not a complete whole in the Aristotelian sense. There is no unity, no continuity, no beginning, middle or end in it. Through these devices he keeps reminding the spectator that he is a spectator and not an actor in the drama. He uses various other means to achieve this effect. Right in the middle of a scene, the meaning of which is already clear enough, suddenly a board is suspended from above with the subject of the scene inscribed on it. In Three Penny Opera a similar board is lowered on the stage as Peecham is singing. The board has the title of the song written on it. Imagine for a moment that a board with TO BE OR NOT TO BE painted in bold letters is suspended on the stage when Hamlet is solilogizing in this famous scene. How would the spectators react to it? The other device is to disturb a scene with bizarre sound effects. Sometimes by hanging small slips, at others by bringing in sign boards showing time and place of the scene, the attention of the spectators is diverted. Crude music out of harmony and confusing strong lights interrupt the play. Thus an impression contrary to the one created by the scene is projected so as to remind the spectator that he is watching a

play and is outside the stage. In this way he would be enabled to see a drama in the same way as he watches the day to day events of life so that he may react to them spontaneously and freely as he reacts to the real situations in life, and form an independent judgement about them. In *Three Penny Opera* when Peecham asks Polly: 'Have you really gone and got married?', the scene is presented like this:

Song illumination:golden light. The organ is lit up. Three lights come down on a bar and on a board is written:

#### IN A LITTLE SONG POLLY GIVES HER PARENTS A HINT OF HER MARRIAGE WITH THE GANGSTER MACHEATH.<sup>22</sup>

Then follows her song which makes no mention of her marriage, but tells of her innocence and its loss. Sometimes during a scene, right in the middle of it, a man appears on the stage and addresses the spectators directly. He speaks partly like the chorus and partly like a bard singing a narrative. He starts relating the events which have yet to follow. This forestalls any suspense, and the dramatic effect of what Aristotle calls discovery is spoiled.

Similarly all the stage paraphernalia, such as, the microphones, the scenery, the lights, etc., are made absolutely visible and obvious. All this leads to the same one object; to keep the spectator outside the stage, uninvolved. The idea is to give him the impression that he is only watching the rehearsal of the play, and not the play. All these devices are used unexpectedly and in quick succession and would not let the attention of the spectator stay at any one point. He feels as if he is watching not theatre but circus. The dialogue also proceeds in a haphazard way for the same reason.

Brecht uses such devices to create alienation effect. The spectator is no more a dumb spectator, and endeavours to answer the questions raised on the stage. This helps in making drama an objective and detached art in the same way as a scientist studies problems dispassionately, without emotional

involvement, mental reservation and prejudice. Thus drama is made explorative — uncertain and unpredictable, like life itself.

This detached view of art has been approved and supported by many modern dramatists. Eliot has complained that on the modern stage:

The actor is called upon for a great deal that is not his business, and is left to his own devices for things in which he should be trained.<sup>23</sup>

He deplores the absence of a technical convention of the stage. He believes that there should be no subjective element in the art of acting. He thinks of a convention like that of the ballet:

A great actor on the ordinary stage is a person who also exists off it and who supplies the role which he performs with the person which he is. A ballet is apparently a thing which exists only as acted and would appear to be a creation much more of the dancer than of the choreographer. This is not quite true. It is a development of several centuries into a strict form. In the ballet only that is left to the actor which is properly the actor's part. The general movements are set for him. There are only limited movements that he can make, only a limited degree of emotion that he can express. He is not called upon for his personality. 24

The ballet dancer is trained in the art of dancing. He learns the technique and performs through it. He does not try to create in himself the emotion of happiness in order to present it on the stage. He makes movements and gestures that express happiness. Aristotle had also made it clear that Tragedy imitated action, not character. The Greek drama was impersonal, so was the classical Indian drama. For that matter all classical drama, all drama in ancient societies was impersonal, as in China and Japan. In those societies impersonal drama was possible. In the first place, they had a clear and definite concept of the stage. The actors appeared in masks. They never appeared as persons. Modern drama lacks

any such tradition. Brecht used his actors as masks and this he highlighted by interrupting a scene with introducing a character who was not acting, and who addressed the spectators directly. In contrast to this realistic appearance the actors look so stylised — almost as masks. Masks as such cannot be introduced now for the same traditional stage effects, simply because the demands of the scientific age are very different from those of the age which was steeped in mythology. In those days different characters had traditionally fixed forms. It is no more possible now. Prufrocks have no fixed form.

Brecht's approach is paradigmatic. In order to study life he prepares its various models. He considers it the function of art to comprehend life and to change it, to give it a meaningful turn, a healthy direction, since if it could not be altered, life will be extremely oppressive. The artist must see life as alterable and controlable, according to the demands of human sympathy. Thus Brecht creates a paradigm, which includes the world-view, the system of values and the tactics necessary to achieve the desired end. He prepares different models. Each Brecht play is a 'model' which has been prepared according to the paradigm, and signifies an effort to reach the stipulated goal. That is why a Brecht play has no conclusive end. Each play ends with the hint of a new beginning.

An Excerpt from TIME magazine:

CONCERN FOR GALILEO

One of the great embarrassments in Roman Catholic Church history is the condemnation of Italian Astronomer Galileo Galilei by the Holy Office as "vehemently suspected of heresy." His crime: writing in defense of Copernicus' hypothesis that the earth revolves around the sun. In 1616 the Holy Office had proclaimed the Copernican view "formally heretical inasmuch as it expressly contradicts the doctrines of Holy Scripture in many places, both according to their literal meaning" and the common interpretation of the early Church Fathers. The head of the Holy Office, which was responsible for seeking out heresy, ordered Galileo not to disseminate his views, and the astronomer agreed. Nonetheless, his 1632 master work. Dialogue on the Two Great World Systems, pursued the theory. The Holy Office condemned Galileo and kept him under house arrest during his final years.

Last week John Paul II virtually admitted that the church had made a major mistake. In 1980 the Pope had set up a special commission composed of eight scientists, historians and theologians to review the evidence. He showed his sympathy for Galileo in a speech to a Rome meeting of 200 leading scientists, who were honoring the 350th anniversary of the publication of the Dialogue,

"The church's experience during the Galileo affair and after it had led to a more mature attitude toward a more accurate grasp of its proper authority," said the Pope. "The church learns by experience and reflection, and it now understands better the meaning that must be given to freedom of research. We recognize that [Galileo] suffered from certain bodies of the church,"

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#### THE DRAMATIC ART OF MAXIM GORKY

Gorky's drama is basically ideological in the sense that his practice and thought are thoroughly steeped in ideology.

Life and ideology have become identical through assimilation in his character. Thus, the art that emerges from his personality is an organization of his experience of life in aesthetic terms. Gorky defined creative act in the following way:

Creativity is that degree of intensity in the work of the memory at which the rapidity of its operation produces from its store of knowledge and impressions the most outstanding and characteristic facts, pictures and details, and puts them into the most precise and vivid words that all can understand.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, art is not a thing that exists out there, and for the acquisition of which the artist has to seek in all sorts of places; neither is art a subjective state which the artist may capture through meditation. He does not have to close his eyes in order to get the vision in an ecstasy. According to Gorky, creative art is neither a yeast-like growth in the mind, nor is it a purely detached process working like a chemical action transforming various elements into some new whole. The first theory of art is shared by Shakespeare's Holofernes, who describes the creative act as:

. . . a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions: these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion.<sup>2</sup>

The other comes from T.S. Eliot:

The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.<sup>3</sup>

This is the chemical theory of the creative activity

according to which the various ingredients by themselves form into a chemical compound. On the other hand, art is also not mimetic either, since according to Gorky:

Mirrors are things kept in houses to enable people to comb their hair to suit their faces, scrutinize pimples or wrinkles on noses or cheeks, or preen themselves.<sup>4</sup>
Against all this Gorky asserted:

As I saw it, any passive role was unworthy of litera-

He does not even believe art to be like the lamp that brings the hidden aspects of life to light. This was how Plotinus explained the nature of art in which the mind acts like the sun throwing out its rays:

Plotinus explicitly rejected the concept of sensations as 'imprints' or 'seal-impressions' made on a passive mind, and substituted the view of the mind as an act and a power which 'gives a radiance out of its own store' to the objects of sense.<sup>6</sup>

Art, according to Gorky, is a weapon in the hand of the worker through which he can comprehend and change life; and life, to Yelena, in *The Petty Bourgeois*, is

Existence – that's matter in form.

The artist does not merely confine himself to the acquisition of an understanding of life; he tries to recreate it. He chisels life and gives it a new shape. In this way life becomes art through aesthetic experience. The harmony between art and life is perhaps best illustrated in Gorky. His art is almost autobiography. It is art nevertheless, and his life is so steeped in it that its spontaneity hardly makes us conscious of its being art. An effortless ease is the mark of Gorky's work. His experience is so direct, so simple and so authentic that no effort is required to grasp it and no need is felt to speculate about it.

Art is not mere entertainment. It is serious business to Gorky. He has no sympathy for those who seek escape through art, such as Ryumin in SUMMER FOLK, who protests:

What if a person wants to be deceived. You're always talking about life. What is life? The word calls up before me the image of a huge, formless monster that's always demanding a sacrifice - a human sacrifice. Day after day it gobbles up human brain and brawn and swills human blood. Why, I don't know, I see no meaning in it, but I know that the longer a man lives, the more filth and vulgarity - crude, loathsome vulgarity – he sees, and therefore the more intense grows his longing for the Beautiful and the Pure. He is unable to overcome life's contradictions or to purge life of its filth and evil. Well, then, at least let him close his eyes to all that crushes his spirit! Let him turn his face away from whatever offends him. He wants to rest, to forget. He wants to live in peace and tranquillity.8

The speech recalls to the mind some typical characters of lonesco. But Gorky does not stop here. He suggests a healthy view of life and art. Ryumin finds life horrible because to him everything in it is preordained, while the only contingency is human existence, which has no purpose and no meaning. Maria reacts sharply to this:

Try to elevate the chance fact of your existence to the level of social necessity, and then life will take on meaning for you.<sup>9</sup>

Thus suggesting that meanings do not inhere in life; meanings are created in life. Those who fail to create meanings, that is, those who cannot make life meaningful through their work, they are like those in *SUMMER FOLK*, of whom Varvara says:

We talk about the tragedy of life without really living, and we wallow in the pleasure of moaning and complaining.<sup>10</sup>

She makes her meaning quite clear by adding:

We poison the air with the refuse thrown out of our kitchens. In just the same way we throw out the garbage of our souls. 11

On the other side are the dirty, working people. According to Sonya:

Their dirt is just on the outside. It washes off with soap and water. 12

This is the reason that when all Ryumin's dreams are dashed to the ground, he finds no justification left to continue living. He is one of those people who neither intend to change their life nor have the ability or courage to do so. They feel utterly helpless. Nil, in *The Petty Bourgeois*, comments on this state:

When a person finds himself lying in an uncomfortable position he turns over on the other side, but when he finds life uncomfortable he does nothing but complain. Why don't you make an effort to turn over?<sup>13</sup>

Gorky is not against entertainment or seeking pleasure through art. At the same time he believes in the primacy of aesthetic values in art. However, to him the purpose of art is to move life ahead. He tries to arouse the awareness of the spectators through his plays and prepares them to face the challenge of life. To him work is of prime importance in life. The Actor, in The Lower Depths, could not achieve anything in life through art. He even loses his identity in the roles that he plays, very much like Sartre's Kean. Perhaps every actor meets the same fate. The Actor shouts in desperation that he 'has lost his name', though he does have a stage name. He finds his existence so meaningless, so insignificant and mean. When Anna, a poor lodger in the same house, dies, he remarks that 'she's lost her name'. 14 But Gorky does not believe that art should become the artist's complex. If one effort fails another attempt can be made, perhaps in a different trade, at another place. The Actor also passes through an experience which almost shatters him. But it brings him a new awareness. Work creates meaning in his life and he resolves that he will quit the meaningless living:

I will go. I worked today — swept the street, and I haven't had a single drink. Think of that! Here they are — my thirty kopeks, and I'm sober! 15

In the same manner, Varvara, in Summer Folk, acquires a new awareness. She says:

Yes, I'm going away —as far away as possible from any place where everything is rotten and corrupt. Away from these people with nothing to do. I want to live! and I intend to live. To live and work—to undo the harm you've done. May you be accursed for ever!<sup>16</sup>

Pyotr, of *The Petty Bourgeois*, also wants to gain this awareness. But his mind is not clear yet. So far he could realise only this much:

I was fond of gingerbread and lollipops in those days, but they make me sick now.<sup>17</sup>

·He realizes that the times have changed and the old values have been worn out. He wants to break the shackles. He says to his father:

You're right, but your way of seeing things is a way that's too tight for us. We've grown out of it, as we grew out of our clothes. It stifles us, holds us down. Your way of life. Won't do for us. 18

He has so far acquired the awareness that is sufficient for him to make the protest. He has not yet reached the stage of embarking on action. But the failures of life are not compensated by intellectual effort. All realization is possible in action alone, since values are created by work. In the words of Gorky:

It was under the influence of labour processes that 'reality turned into idea.' 19

Gorky believes that idea is created through work. It was this belief which prompted him to study life through literature, and to demonstrate the importance of work in life. He arrived at the conclusion:

I would like to advise those embarking on prose and poetic writing to delete from their vocabulary the aristocratic expression 'creative efforts' and substitute for it a simpler and more accurate word — work.

When a young man has written a slender booklet of mediocre verse or inferior stories and terms his 'output' "creative efforts", this sounds childish and

ridiculous in a country in which the working class is not only building huge factories, but is completely refashioning the face of the land, bringing about in the countryside something in the nature of a geological upheaval, and, in general, is tirelessly carrying out collosal work of world-wide significance, in conditions that tax all its strength. It should be realized and remembered that all this is being built almost 'out of nothing'. 20

Creative work, whether manual or intellectual, is creative work in the same sense. There is no basic difference between the creative effort of a labourer and that of an artist:

The people are not merely the force which has created all material values; they are the exclusive and inexhaustible source of spiritual values in time, beauty and genius; they are collectively, the first and foremost philosopher and poet, creator of all the great poems that exist, all the tragedies in the world, and, greatest among these tragedies, the history of world culture. <sup>21</sup>

In these ideas about literature and art is also rooted the belief that:

The world of labour has reached a consciousness of the necessity of revolution. It is the task of literature to help him who has risen in revolt.<sup>22</sup>

This is the trend of Gorky's thought, and his plays must be read in the light of these views. Each play that he writes grows out of the experience of life and the artist's reaction to that. The Petty Bourgeois is a study of the decadant middle class. The Lower Depths is the story of man's humiliation by man, and of the illusions that he weaves around himself as a reaction to this humiliation. Summer Folk tells of the new generation which has emerged from its lower shades of life through its labour and talent but which has lost contact with its roots and has neglected its duty to the poor and helpless classes to which it once belonged. Enemies is an attempt at identifying friends and foes in such a way that our attention may not remain confined to a few individual examples of evil, and instead try to go to the

very depths and roots of evil. In the same way Yegor Bulychov and others exposes the ugly intrigues and crimes of the upper class, and reveals how only one value remains, and that is money. Vassa Zheleznova is a picture of filth, pride, helplessness and a sense of insecurity in a world where everything is sacrificed to false prestige and dubious reputation.

Art never becomes thesis in Gorky, as it so often tends to become in the works of some modern writers, such as the absurdists. If thesis dominates, art is reduced to sermon; and if art dominates over the thesis, it becomes mere form and technique. It is for this reason that in most modern drama we find either pure ideology or pure form. Beautiful experiments in form may be genuinely appreciated, but form alone does not create great art. Otherwise too, niceties in form are generally indulged in to conceal the hollowness of content. Gorky does not resort to tricks. He is apparently impatient of all such gimmics. He fully agrees with the views of Lenin:

Here much is pure hypocrisy and of course unconscious deference to the art fashions ruling the West. We are good revolutionaries but somehow we feel obliged to prove that we are also 'up to the mark in modern culture'. I however make bold to declare myself a 'barbarian'. It is beyond me to consider the products of expressionism, futurism, cubism and other 'isms' the highest manifestations of artistic genius. I do not understand them. I experience no joy from them.<sup>23</sup>

While Gorky gives equal importance to both ideology and art, since in art he seeks purposiveness as well as entertainment, he also accepts romanticism, beside realism, as an artistic need. But at the same time he strongly condemns and ridicules cheap and vulgar romanticism. Tania, in *The Petty Bourgeois*, is allergic to romantic stories which have no relevance to life. She finds the melodrama of the theatre as false. The stage is so noisy, whereas

Life twists people into knots without any noise and shouting. Without any tears. Imperceptibly.<sup>24</sup>

And Pyotr adds:

They dramatise the tortures of love, but nobody gives a damn for the drama of a man torn between duty and desire. 25

Teterev in a similar vein shouts in torture:

Be puctilious in returning good for good, brothers, for no one on earth is more pitiable and obnoxious than he who gives alms to his neighbour. But when you receive evil, return it many times over. Be cruelly lavish in paying back the evil your neighbour does you. If, when you ask for a crust of bread, he gives you a stone, bring the entire cliff down on his head.<sup>26</sup>

Yelena cuts him short:

People must have made you suffer horribly.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, in SUMMER FOLK, Vlas makes fun of Shalimov and Kaleria who pretend to be writers and poets. When Kaleria says,

New inspiration is given to life by people who believe in something.

By the aristocrats of the spirit.

Vlas exclaims,

Who are these aristocrats? Where are they to be found? 28

Then he reads out a poem about all these people, about the writers, poets and aristocrats of the spirit:

Little, lugubrious people, Shrinking from storm and strife, Wander the earth in search of A means of escaping life.

Drab little cowards and liars,

With nothing but moans in their breast,

They hope to get happiness gratis -

Comfort, satiety, rest.

Empty their high sounding phrases,

Stolen their trivial thoughts

Little, lugubrious people,

Born of miasmal grots. 29

These are the people who have lost faith. To Gorky, faith is no abstraction. It is an assurance that is created in action and is stifled through inaction. Capability in fact means confidence. Tatyana bewails of this loss. Here she is, in *The Petty Bourgeois*:

Do you think I don't want to face life as cheerfully and bravely as you do?

I do, but – I can't. I was born without faith, I learned to think.<sup>30</sup>

Another aspect of romanticism that seeks refuge in the world of fantasy is the 'true — righteous land' of Luka in *The Lower Depths.* He is always looking for some new faith. Gorky rejects all these forms of romanticism, since the 'true — righteous land' of Luka, the sentimental novels of Nastya and Satin's hollow realism, his humanism and slogans of the dignity of labour are just different forms of the same illusion.

However, there is the acceptance of a positive romanticism in Gorky. One kind of this romanticism is man's great confidence in himslef — confidence in his own strength, in collective action and in a better future. He acts not only guided by reason, but also urged by passion. His mind and heart go together in the action. He thinks as well as feels. Thus, realism to him is not just to see life with the eye of the camera. Gorky emphasised:

Personally I am of the opinion that "realism" could cope with its difficult task if, in considering the individual in the process of his development along the road from age-old philistine and feral individualism towards socialism, it depicted man not only such as he is to-day, but also such as he must and shall be tomorrow.

This does not mean that I advise "inventing" human character, but simply that:

I think the writer is entitled, and moreover is in duty bound to, "amplify" man. 31

In other words, art acts as a telescope as well as a microscope, and thus not only the external features will be

clearly delineated, the class characteristics will also become visible. There is no medium more suited to this task than the stage.

There is another literary convention that can be used for achieving this "realism", that is, certain characteristics may be ignored while others exaggerated. Realistic art has the privilege to exaggerate. Gorky considers this convention of art very important and argues that

genuine art possesses the right to exaggerate; that the Herculses, Prometheuses, Don Quixotes, and Fausts are not "the fruits of fantasy" but perfectly legitimate and essential poetic exaggerations of actual facts. 32

Yegor Bulychov and Vassa Zheleznova are such literary exaggerations. Like the characters of Dickens these are more caricatures than representations of men and women because, like Dickens, Gorky too is not interested in individuals. He rather aims at depicting specific aberrations in human nature. Bulychov is not the picture of an individual; it is the depiction of a specific natural deformity, in the same way as in Hard Times Gradgrind is less an individual than a successful and interesting caricature of the philosophy of Utilitarianism. Similar is the case with Vassa who has a marked resemblance with Bernarda of Lorca. She is not a woman, but a force - cruel and destructive. But Vassa is also different from Bernarda. With Bernarda's feudal mentality she combines a bourgeois assertiveness. Here Gorky, like some of his great predecessors, has made a rewarding effort of presenting corrupted mentalities in flesh and blood. The individual is not important for him. In Enemies, Levshin says:

What good is killing? No good at all, Kill one dog and the boss buys another.<sup>33</sup>

And, according to Yelena, in The Petty Bourgeois, a murderer is only a stone that somebody else had thrown. 34

Characters are not important. The forces that impel them are important. Gorky has elaborated upon this in the following way:

"It is no use blaming the mirror if your face is ugly".

but I was also beginning to realize that "faces were ugly" not because they wished to be so, but because a certain force was operating in life that was disfiguring everybody and everything, and it was that force that ought to be "reflected", not that which it disfigured. 35

Ionesco depicts mutilated faces, Gorky the force that mutilates. And Gorky defends his art:

I have come in for criticism for having allegedly "romanticised tramps", placed groundless and vain hopes on the *lumpen* proletariat, and even attributed to them Nietzschean attitude of mind.<sup>36</sup>

He denies that he has romanticised the characters. But he does concede that he has supplied them with "certain features of Nietzsche's philosophy". In his defence he wrote:

That is because these people, who had been dashed out of a "normal" life to drift into doss-houses and membership of low groups, possessed definite features of psychological affinity with certain sets of "defeated" intellectuals. Here I made use of my author's right to "amplify" his material and I think that life has fully justified this "trick of the trade". 37

He resorts to this "trick of the trade" with the belief that the function of art is not just to reveal and expose, or even to point the way, but also to make the way. For this reason the artist must have a vision of the future. Gorky defined this vision or intuition:

"Intuitive" should not be understood as meaning something ahead of knowledge, something "prophetic". It provides the missing links and details to experimental searches when they have been started as hypothesis or image. 38

Thus intuition sees more than the merely visible or superficial reality. For this reason its view of reality appears exaggerated.

Even otherwise, additions and subtractions are at the root of all art. Literature makes a selection from the varied and rich details of life, accepting some and rejecting

others. Thus certain things are made prominent while others are pushed into the background. A writer focuses on a character or an aspect of it and thus creates a perspective. He succeeds in communicating his point of view easily and convincingly. The characters of Dickens do become caricatures, but they reveal his purpose; as, for example, in Miss Havisham and Mr. Dorrit the characters become symbols. Both aesthetically as well as technically this device is very helpful in serving the writer's object. Even otherwise, art is after all a symbolic representation of life, and a character has a symbolic value. The authoritarian attitude of Bessemenov, the frustration of Vlas, the helplessness of Anna, false consolations of Luka, Satin's assurances and the moral degeneration of the Zheleznova have been made the subjects of his plays by Gorky, and he has successfully projected these attitudes in flesh and blood.

For this reason, too, he does not consider the artist a "catalyst". According to T.S. Eliot the artist is a catalyst who stands absolutely out of the creative act and does not at all participate in it. The man who suffers, according to him, is different from the mind that creates. Gorky rejected this approach. He said:

The facts of history have established that in a bourgeois society the intellect has acted as a "catalyst", which, with varying degrees of success, has aspired to link and unite, i.e., to reconcile, and in the social sphere reconciliation is subordination of one force to another. Individualists should be shown that in capitalist conditions the intellect is least of all concerned about its rapid growth and seeks only subtle equilibrium. <sup>39</sup>

Gorky's is a progressive view of life. Human mind is not subservient to environment. It struggles to get control over the circumstances. In this process it builds while it demolishes;

The writer must also have good knowledge of the past history and of the social phenomena of contemporary society, in which he is called upon to fulfil his dual role of mid-wife and grave-digger, . .for we need simply recall that our young literature has been summoned by history to destroy and bury all that is inimicable to men,inimicable even when they might still love it.<sup>40</sup>

.Thus Gorky rejected the theories of "entropy" and "compensation". He argued:

It is quite possible that the hypothesis of "entropy"—the tendency of energy to arrive at a state of rest—is merely an expression of a tired mind's urge to achieve a state of rest or calm. In the same way the theory of "compensation", which claims that physiological defects of the organism are balanced by an increase in brain power, is a teaching whose basic idea, if transposed into the field of sociology, would justify shameful abnormalities in social relations, in the manner attempted by Malthus and many other bourgeois thinkers. 41

A similar theory was presented by Freud about the creative activity. He thought that art was a compensation for the failures and frustrations of life, or that, on the lines of Aristotle, it is a process of the catharsis of emotions. Gorky does not agree with such unhealthy views of art. In the same way he has rejected the theories of bourgeois realism, since these too do not take into consideration the healthy development of society. He is of the opinion that:

The realism of bourgeois literature is critical realism, but only to the extent that criticism is necessary for class "strategy": for revealing the mistakes of the bourgeoisie in the struggle for the establishment of firm power...

As against this,

Socialist realism wages a struggle against "survivals of the past", against its corrupting influence and for uprooting these influences.<sup>42</sup>

Gorky believes in complete demolition. To him bourgeois realism is just a tinkering aimed at smoothing out of the dents in the existing system as best as possible. Such realism only exposes the weaknesses of a society, and com-

pliments itself for waging a war against social evils. Gorky feels that time has run out for any reforms in the system. Satire is therefore no more an effective literary weapon. Satire can expose and condemn, but it cannot change the society. Change is neither its object, nor it has the courage and strength to bring it about. The ruling classes in fact encourage such criticism. They can use it to show that they tolerate honest criticism, and that there exists no censorship on thought and expression in the society. Thus an oppressive system finds an opportunity to show that it is just and impartial. The rulers derive a further advantage from such criticism and satire, since these help in soothing the emotions and softening the people's wrath by providing a cushion to their frustrations and irritations. In this way art serves as a cathartic agent, prepares the people to accept the abject conditions of life as their lot, and ultimately makes them easy slaves. They come to a compromise, which in an unjust system is the subjugation of one force to another. For this reason Aristotle had opposed the puritanism of Plato. To make people subservient to authority a little elbow room, a little catharsis, is necessary. At least the ruling classes fully realise that their rule is based not on morality but on force. They will not mind a few abuses hurled at them if these could strengthen their hold on the people. He whose interest is at stake does at least know that much.

Gorky did not write tragedies either. He had a clear mind on this question:

Tragedy would be too lofty a term for a world in which all "sufferings" arise in a struggle for proprietorship of man and things, and under the slogan of the "fight for freedom", a struggle is often waged for the extension of the "right" to exploit the labour of others. Even when he is a "covetous knight", the philistine is never a tragic figure, since a lust for money and gold is a ridiculous and unlovely quality. 43

He goes on to elaborate his views and concludes:

Tragedy is quite incompatible with the vulgarity in-

evitably inherent in petty philistine dramas, which soil and sully life. A scuffle among monkeys at a zoo cannot be tragedy.<sup>44</sup>

The life of people caught in a rat race for money is as miserable as it is ridiculous, in a world full of meanness and filth. In the house of Bessemenov, in The Petty Bourgeois, or in the world of hungry and miserable tramps, in The Lower Depths, the concept of "tragedy" is totally out of place. Gorky believes that a new age of tragedy is beginning, of the tragedy that is not Sophoclean or Shakespearean; but of the new heroes of history, where the archvillain is "private property". These new heroes are fighting against this villain. Gorky does not see helplessness and absurdity in man's existence as Beckett or Ionesco do. He believes that individual existence has lost meaning by losing contact with collective living. He quoted Dobrolyubov in support of his belief:

"To the mass of people our interests are alien, our sufferings incomprehensible, and our rapture amusing. We work and write in the interest of what is merely a circle, be it larger or smaller."

Such a writer is Shalimov, in *Summer Folk*, and another is Kaleria. Shalimov states his frustration in the following way:

I am not writing at all. Who can write in times like this? There's no making head or tail of what's going on. People are all so hazy and mixed up—you can't put your finger on them.

Basov rightly advises him:

Write just that—that you can't make head or tail of it Sincerity is the main thing in a writer.<sup>46</sup>

But Shalimov fully realizes that life cannot be lived on sincerity alone. There is also a suggestion here that creative art is not an individual act, since concepts and ideas are always collective. For this reason, in a community that is in a state of chaos the individual finds himself helpless, even sees his existence as meaningless. This sense of meaninglessness

offers the conservative writer only two alternatives: either he should accept the situation with all its unrest, confusion, fear and uncertainty, and try to portray it as such with honest detachment, as Shakespeare did, whose art carried no specific message, a fault for which he was reprimanded by Dr. Johnson. Shakespeare confines himself to analysis and explication. Or, he should concentrate on technique, and excel in it. The artist should keep in practice lest talent and technique get blunted. Creativity is a collective act, and must be sought patiently, but art is a personal achievement, which is possible only through hard labour. If both the alternatives fail him, the artist is caught in the mire of loneliness, which takes him to the verge of madness.

Individuality over-emphasised creates alienation which weakens social commitment, and even patriotic feelings. Then, with the blurring of national and communal identity, the individual's own identity is threatened. Pyotr, in *The Petty Bourgeois*, says:

"This Russia of ours!" How strange it sounds! Is Russia really ours? Is it mine? Is it yours? Who are "we"? What are "we"?<sup>47</sup>

He insists, and elaborates:

It seems to me that when a Frenchman or an Englishman says "France" or "England", the word means something real, something concrete and comprehensible. But when I say "Russia", it means nothing at all to me. I'm quite incapable of giving it any clear meaning. There are lots of words we use by force of habit, without taking stock of their meaning—"life", for instance. "My life". What meaning is hidden in these two words?<sup>48</sup>

There remains no faith in life itself, and society assumes a repulsive aspect:

Society? That's the one thing I loathe! It keeps raising the demands made on the individual without giving him an opportunity to develop normally and unimpeded.

Thus Pyotr arrives at the conclusion:

Well, I tried being a citizen, damn them! I have no desire and am under no obligation to submit to the demands of society! I am an individual, and an individual must be free. 49

The values of such a society naturally fan the individualistic feelings against collective thinking. In *The Lower Depths*, Pepel says:

You can't wear honour and conscience on your feet in place of shoes. It's only those in power who can afford to have honour and conscience. 50

In *The Petty Bourgeois*, Bessemenov chastises his children in these words :

A person ought to have something that makes him different from others. They don't. They've got no character. Take Nill — he's brazen, he's a scoundrel, but he's got character. He's dangerous, but you can understand him.<sup>51</sup>

It means that to have a character implies to be different from others. In a society based upon competitive values only such distinctions would be acknowledged. Bessemenov laments:

We made a mistake when we built that wall between us by giving them education. 52

Education, which should normally bring man closer to man, draws a wedge between them. The whole society, paradoxically, comes to rest on distinctions. Olga, in Summer Folk, observes:

Summer will soon be over. We'll all move back to town and there, fenced in by stone walls, we'll be more inaccessible to each other than ever. We'll be quite like strangers. 53

And Vlas, continuing in a similar vein, determines:

And I'll spend the rest of my life tearing off the costumes they wear to cover up their lies, their vulgarity, the poverty of their feelings and the obscenity of their thoughts. 54

Only ordinary people with mediocre talent can progress in this kind of society, the people who have neither capability, nor feeling, nor even faith or confidence. The capable are left behind in this race, as Teterev says of Bessemenov:

You are middling wise and middling stupid, middling good and middling bad, middling honest and middling false, middling brave and middling cowardly—in a word, a model petty bourgeois. The commonplace finds perfect expression in you, and that is a force which even heroes bow before — a force that lives on and is for ever triumphant. 55

The supremacy of the mediocre and the mean is a torture. Physical hardships pale into insignificance before such humiliation. Nil sharply reacts to it:

It's exhausting to sit in the cab on a can like that — exhausting and dangerous. And even so it has its charms. The only thing that has no charm is that honest people have to take orders from pigs — from thieves and imbeciles. <sup>56</sup>

In an exploitative society values are subjected to vested interests. Morality, nation, country and culture, all are reduced to meaningless and irrelevant concepts. In *ENEMIES*, Zakhar protests that it is not proper to advance an immoral and indecent man in career, since such characters find no favour with cultured people. Moreover, he insists, that they are Europeans. They are civilized. Mikhail debunks the whole jargon:

First of all we are factory owners.<sup>57</sup>

In other words, values no more emerge from history, geography, traditions or beliefs. These are exclusively rooted in economic interests. Shalimov, the writer in SUMMER FOLK, also has similar ideas. He is a practical man. He looks for the market for his writings. But he is not sure of the demand in the market. It appears that the demand has suddenly changed: He is confused about the new kind of reader, and says:

But I have a feeling. Whenever I walk down the street

I see people of a new type. There is something special in their faces—and in their eyes. I look at them and think to myself: they won't read me,they're not interested in what I have to say. This winter I read my work at some sort of a gathering. I saw them there,too. They kept looking at me—looking at me with all their eyes—attentively,searchingly but I could see they weren't my sort. They don't like me. They have about as much need of me as of Latin. They find me outworn—and my ideas too. Who could they be? Who do they like? What is it they want. <sup>58</sup>

Thus all values get confused and the young minds are forced to rebel. They come to believe that there is only one value, and that is power. Nil shouts:

Rights aren't given, they're taken. A person's got to win rights for himself if he doesn't want to be crushed under a weight of obligations. <sup>59</sup>

Existing values stand in the way of winning the rights, since the system is erected on them and the system will not give in. The operative values are codified and given a legal status. This is called law. Law is not a system based on abstract principles. It is a system of securities based upon expediency. When the society is in a state of chaos, and all kinds of security become doubtful, legal assurances are rendered meaningless and there is then left no sense in, or justification for, the rule of law. When in *Enemies*, Mikhail complains that there is no respect for law in Russia, Paulina retorts:

But that's only natural. How can there be respect for law in a country where there is no law?<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand is Kon. He is a soldier, and suffers no such confusions. The issue of law is quite clear in his head:

There is no law. There's only a command. Left face! Forward march! And off you go. When they say "halt"! it means halt.<sup>61</sup>

This is not a question of "generation gap". Gorky has beautifully analysed the situation. According to him this alienation, this conflict of attitudes results from the writer's escapist tendencies. Literature is never outworn. It is always meaningful, always effective and living. Only pseudoliterature wears out. According to Matthew Arnold, there is no room for charlatanism in literature. He quotes Sainte-Beuve in his support:

"In politics, in the art of governing mankind, that's perhaps true. But in that order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being." 62

Genuine art never falls. Fake literature is exposed, sooner or later. Shalimov could not sustain the false lustre of his writings for long. In the closing lines of the play he says:

Come, come. The Suslovs, as you see, have decided to go on living. Let us calmly do the same. 63

Shalimov is no artist. Neither is he for change, nor does he strive for any improvement. He is simply looking for a compromise. At last he succeeds. He surrenders to the circumstances. This does not become a writer. He, therefore, seeks for some justification, and the same old excuse:

It's all so unimportant, old fellow. Everything. People as well as events. Pour me out a glass of wine. So utterly meaningless, old fellow.

And the curtain falls.

Kaleria's is almost the same situation. She is a poetess. But she has no faith in her poetry. She sees it as a futile effort. She is very apologetic about the poem she is going to read:

Well, I'm going to begin. My poems will meet the same fate as your words, Varya. Everything is sucked down into the mire of this life of course. 64

When recitations from poetry and all the games and entertainments come to an end and the carefree picnickers

prepare to leave, the watchmen sum up their life in a few words:

All the rubbish they leave, the swine! Like picnickers, these summer folk—come, clutter things up and go away, leaving you to sweep and pick up after them. 65

The rubbish that is to be picked up by others has a symbolic significance. Dirt is left behind all the time, and others keep coming to clean it up. These are the "loitering heirs of city directors" who have departed, leaving behind no addresses, but only:

empty bottles, sandwich papers,

Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends Or other testimony of summer nights. 66

For Gorky the problem of the modern world is neither isolation nor alienation. It is irresponsibility, laziness and a diseased mentality. The main reason for this is that a man cut off from the society becomes selfish and is scared of death. He lives in an atmosphere of death. Even "such a worshipper of the "I" as August Strindberg" could not help remarking:

"Mankind is a tremendous storage battery made up of numerous cells; the isolated cell will run down at once." 67

Gorky has also taken up the problem of the absurdists. He has particularly analysed the concept of meaninglessness. He finds that negative values are encouraged due to an overemphasis on individualism, and man reaches the stage of alienation and aimlessness, where even the idea of gaining eternal life loses sense:

Gloomy and vengeful spectres of the past surround him like Furies, keeping him in a constant state of hysterical agitation, evoking from the depths of his instincts atavistic and brutish urges. Blunted and shattered, his nerves cry out for powerful and acute stimuli — hence the hooligan's proneness to sexual perversity, sensuality and sadism. Conscious of his impotence, this creature is more and more often forced to spurn the growing demands presented by life, leading to a loss of social

moral sense, to nihilism and a bitter resentment, so typical in the hooligan. <sup>68</sup>

However, Gorky does not see any invisible metaphysical force active behind the turmoils of life, as the absurdists do. Gorky sees this force very distinctly, with all its features clearly marked out. He has very nicely stated the difference in outlook. On the one side is the defeated individualism:

Reduced to spiritual beggary, caught up in the toils of contradictions, and always ridiculous and pitiful in its attempts to find itself a cosy nook to shelter in, individualism is disintegrating and becomes more and more paltry in its mentality. Feeling this and overcome by despair, which it may realize or try to conceal from itself, individualism is on the rampage in search of salvation, seeking after God but prepared to believe in Satan.<sup>69</sup>

#### And all this because:

Of course hopes of bliss in the world to come prevent nobody from making the most of life on earth—good food, drinks, and card-playing, seducing maidens and other such amusements—but neither do they prevent him from complaining about the burden of life. 70

This is the world of Yegor Bulychov where sensuality desecrates the most sacred relationships, and where the holy abbesses are caught in the snares of lust and greed. In this world one sometimes hears such arguments:

Who is richer than anybody else in the world? God is, D'you get that? So what follows is that the richer I am, the nearer I am to God. A rich man is a big man. He's a law unto himself, and it isn't for a sponger like you to deny that law. 71

#### A good piece of scholastic logic!

On the other side there is a clear view of life, without scepticism, misgivings, selfishness, prejudice, hypocrisy, fear or greed. To Gorky\* life is not hopeless. It is not so mysterious either. The forces operating behind this despair and hepelessness are private property and capitalism:

Private property developed, which disunited people, embittering their relations and engendering irreconcilable contradictions. Man had to strain every effort to escape being engulfed in poverty. In defending his private interests, the individual lost every nexus with the tribe, the state and society. 72

These are very serious problems, and for their solution, too, there is no doubt or confusion in the mind of Gorky. No miracle is needed to relieve man of his anxieties and his sense of isolation. No invisible hand will ever come to his rescue. It is not something which will be accomplished by a hero:

What can Don Quixote do to liberate hundreds of millions of people from the captivity of property relations and the yoke of capitalism.<sup>73</sup>

These negative forces of the world can only be fought against through collective action. There is no personal solution possible. In The Lower Depths, Vasilisa thinks that Pepel will release her from the clutches of her father and uncle, and from her ugly life. Personal effort is an adventure which makes a sole crusader look ridiculous, such as, Faust, Don Quixote or the knights of chivalry. No romantic solution is possible to the problems of life, as Luka's dream of an earthly paradise and his intention to go to the Ukraine, where, he has heard, they have opened up a new faith. To Gorky the faith that is not rooted in labour and work is an illusion and a hollow comfort. This comfort can be of use only to those whose interest is to discourage people from living a life of action. Among such people is the owner of the lodging house, Kostylyov, who warns that people should be told of only those things which they want to know. No one has a right to force his opinions on others, however true these may be. Such people, according to him, should go into the caves, where instead of telling people what is right and what is wrong, they should pray for all. Gorky believes that neither people's sins are their own nor are their sufferings due to their own faults. They are also not

subjected to the wrath of some mysterious metaphysical force. He has only one question before him: is truth useful or only sympathy and false comfort. Luka does not pin much faith in human struggle. He firmly believes that circumstances cannot be changed. Therefore, salvation lies in "contentment", in accepting the conditions as they are. The tall claims of Satin present another contrast. He is convinced that humiliation and poverty are not man's destiny, and that circumstances can be changed. But he hardly does anything to realize this change. His belief seems to be in conflict with his character. This inaction, which is a personal failing in the beginning, ultimately turns into an attitude of the mind, and results in all sorts of individual and social abnormalities. Wealthy people, apparently leading comfortable lives, honoured and respected in society, in spite of all the domestic bliss they seem to enjoy, with wives and children, become addicted to homosexuality and bring shame and disaster to the family. The servants are murdered to save the reputations of the masters, and wives poison husbands. The society is caught in a vicious cycle of moral degeneration and imbecility. This is the tragedy of the disintegration of family and of its falling into disrepute which has been a serious concern of all dramatists from Strindberg to Albee, in one form or other. Sometimes it turns men into rhinoceroses and sometimes into robots. Man is enslaved to things. In Vassa Zheleznova, Rachel says to Natalya:

The world of the rich is falling apart, though they are better organized over there (in Europe). Everything is falling apart, starting with the family and over there the family used to be an iron cage. Here (in Russia) it is a wooden one.<sup>74</sup>

#### Then she addresses Vassa:

You may sometimes feel tired of handling your affairs, but to feel the senselessness, the cruelty of it - no, of that you are incapable. I know you. When all's said and done, you are really just a slave, clever and strong, but a slave all the same. Things are corrupted by rot and rust, and you have been corrupted by things. 75

There are two very interesting consequences of this wholesale disaster. On the one hand, as a result of rapid discoveries of science, the scientists developed a tendency towards philosophical speculation. Science is revolutionary, but the conservative scientist is inclined to become a philosopher. According to Gorky, science is developing on monistic lines, <sup>76</sup> but the way the present day science is becoming more and more dependent on collective effort is a big blow to individualism. As a result, the bourgeois is turning away from science and towards metaphysics. The reason for this is that the kind of knowledge which science is providing makes man sensible enough to resist exploitation:

The master classes have always striven to monopolize knowledge and have withheld it in every way from the people, to whom they have revealed crystallised thought only as an instrument to consolidate their power over the masses.<sup>77</sup>

This restriction upon knowledge has been growing in many subtle ways since the time of Galileo, and its scope is further limited with every advance in scientific revelation. This attitude is very injurious to the progress and propagation of knowledge. Consequently, the inventions which should have been possible much earlier have been pushed centuries behind. Gorky cited specific instances in support of his assertion:

The fact that philistine conservatism has retarded the development of industrial techniques is well known, but I would like to remind the reader that the principle of the steam engine was discovered in 120 B.C. and found no practical application for close on two thousand years; a snake-shaped phonograph was invented in the second century B.C. by Alexander of Abonteus, who used it "to foretell the future." Facts such as these run into hundreds and reveal the shameful indifference shown by the philistine towards the work done by inquiring minds. I will quote a final example: this year Marconi transmitted an electric current by

wireless from Genoa to Australia, where he thereby lit electric lamps at a Sydney exhibition. The same sort of thing was done in our country twenty-seven years ago by M.M. Filippov, man of letters and scientist, who had been working for a number of years on the serial transmission of electric current and finally succeeded in lighting, from St. Petersburg, a chandelier located in Tearskoye Selo. This fact did not get due attention, and some days later Filippov was found dead at his home. His apparatus and papers were seized by the police. <sup>78</sup>

Vested interests restrict the progress of science in this manner. They succeed in keeping a large number of people ignorant. But so confined knowledge is itself cramped and distorts the vision.

Another consequence of restricting knowledge is that technique develops beyond human control, since technique is not a collective achievement as knowledge is. Man thus becomes helpless before his own creation. Then horrible bombs and chemical weapons are produced. Man's labour as well as his knowledge hasten his ruin. This is what science has become by disregarding social responsibility and collective commitment. But now science itself is forcing man towards increasing cooperation and participation in the colossal task of harnessing the forces of nature. Huge laboratories and gigantic machines cannot be manipulated by any one individual.

While Gorky has drawn his subjects from clear and positive ideas, he has also made significant experiments in form, and has profitably used conventions and methods of artistic creation. But here too, the most important factor is the writer's own point of view and his reaction to experience, since these determine the aesthetic attitude. An interesting fact is that Gorky's real name was Alexei Maximovich Pushynokhov. Gorky is his pen-name and it means "the Bitter", and reveals his mental anguish. But there is hardly a note of bitterness in his writings. Sentimentalism never intrudes into his scientific analysis and objective criticism.

Gorky thought in a new way. He brought a new perspective to art. At the same time he made full use of the experiments made before him. To him tradition is no abuse and novelty no merit by itself alone. He is a modern writer, in any sense of the term, and he is fully aware of the innovations and varied beauties of the modern theatre. He fully appreciates the significance of myths, classical literature, folk art and the historical sense. Also, he is aware of the intellectual and emotional needs of his spectators. In his plays there are clowns as well as caricatures. Absurdity and confusion of modern life are also reflected in them. At the same time, he is never oblivious of his ideological commitment.

In Summer Folk there frequently prevails a state of confusion on the stage. The picnickers have arranged to stage a play. The movement of actors on the stage and the noise created by them develop into a near rumpus. One is desperately finding his way, while the other is looking for a missing child. Strange chaotic voices reverberate all around. It is difficult to say who is acting and who is really worried, who has put on a mask and who wears his own face; who has genuine hair and who is in a wig. A queer stupid atmosphere is created and at times it appears that we are watching an absurd play.

Beside the use of exaggerations and humour, already discussed, Gorky uses other devices to entertain the spectators. He creates room for music and songs in his plays. Then, though in the background; the spectators are made aware of small performing groups, as in The Petty Bourgeois, Act III, p. 127, staging plays to the workers and the labourers. Most fascinating, however, is Gorky's style. His narrative is captivating. As a labourer, Gorky told tales to the workers that extremely pleased them, and they would exclaim:

"A regular rogue! A real comedian! You should join a travelling show or play at a fair!" <sup>79</sup>

His own life had been so rich and varied that he knew all tastes and fashions from personal experience. He had friends not only among workers and petty servants in small roadside

restaurants but men like Chekhov were among his intimates. He had emerged from all vicissitudes of life with a defiant smile on his face. But there are no heroes in his plays. Most of them are rather clowns, such as Yegor Bulychov and the half-wit Propotty, who are on the one hand related to Benjonson's Volpone, and on the other, to Shylock and Richard III. In ENEMIES, the General and his Orderly, Kon, are good caricatures, as if their characters have been frozen and preserved in them, like Mr. Dorrit and Miss. Havisham of Dickens. These are not human beings, but masks put on human figures. Luka, in The Lower Depths, is like the chorus of classical drama. But he is a negative chorus, who instead of representing the views of the author, offers a contrast to all that the writer stands for. Gorky has presented in Luka an escapist living in a fools' paradise, who is himself caught in illusions and offers false comforts to others.

Gorky has also resorted to symbolism like most modern writers. His metaphors are very apt and beautiful, such as the house of Bessemenov, which is old and has cracks in it, symbolises the old out-worn way of life. It becomes the symbol of a decadent society. The character of birdman in this play is also symbolic. Perchikhin loves the birds which at the same time provide him his living. He understands this conflict of the emotional and material needs of life. Gorky has shown him full of vitality, very energetic and extremely honest, who compares the worn-out thoughts of men like Bessemenov to a damp tree which gives more smoke than fire. Similarly Yelena, defending her husband who is convicted for murder, says that he was only a stone which is thrown to kill. Gorky's metaphor for the significance of tradition is very striking. Shishkin comments on the hobby of coin collecting:

Why, any cobble-stone out in the street is more antique than your coins. 80

Intelligentsia, at another place, is compared to chunks of ice floating on top of the river:

they are hard and they have a shine, but there's a lot of filth frozen into them—a lot that is ugly and shameful, 81

These are the people who are forced to call themselves "dumb intellectuals."

But Gorky does not agree with contemporary symbolists who use misery and poverty as techniques. He does not use poverty simply as a fashion in literature or as a formula to arouse interest. He takes up suffering and misery as his subjects only to show that these can be understood and eliminated. Symbolism is not the object. He has, no doubt, utilized the conventions of the stage, but he never sacrificed realism to technique; there are no formulas, no mysteries, no fantasies in his stories. He converts the ordinary experiences and impressions into the simple language of everyday use. He never stoops to entertain, but invites the spectator to appreciate his artistic achievement and enjoy it. He believed that:

Simple and clear style is achieved not by lowering the level of literary standards but through consummate craftsmanship. 82

But this felicity in Gorky's case is mainly due to the fact that his characters and situations are not the figments of his imagination. They come directly from life. With reference to children's literature he wrote:

Apart from professional writers, literature for children should draw on rich experience of life accumulated by "old-timers" and "seasoned" people, such as hunters, sailors, engineers, airmen, agronomists. workers at machine and tractor stations, and so on. 83

And this is so because "living and creating are mutually indispensible." Science and the arts are inter-related according to Gorky:

It is the business of the revolutionary artists, the "engineer of the soul", to reveal the psycho-chemistry of this transformation from hired manual labourer to master of culture.<sup>84</sup>

Gorky has made important successful experiments in various genres. He has written novels as well dramas, stories and biographies. He lived an intensive and extensive life, and his criticism of life and art is as deep, true and rich as his experience of them. It is his great achievement that while remaining loyal to his ideology he has not ignored the interest of the spectator. In the words of Ungar:

While Gorky defended the primacy of the revolutionary political struggle as a theme for writers, he found himself attracted by his opponents' literary style and skill as well as their highly erudite arguments for the primacy of aesthetics over any other subject, including politics, for the purpose of judging literature. 85

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# ANDULUSIAN TRADITIONS AND FOLKLORE IN THE PLAYS OF FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

Born in 1898, Lorca was mysteriously executed by the Falangists in the early days of Spanish Civil War in 1936. His great merit and special interest for us lie in his being an Andulusian poet and playwright. The grandeur and grief of Granada are reflected in every word that he writes. He is a chronicler of its triumph and fall. He records the splendour as well as the tragedy of the great civilisation and culture that enriched his land for centuries. The Granada that this young Andulusian is celebrating in his songs and lamenting in his dirges, in some very significant ways, stirs our feelings too. There is a pathetic undertone, almost nostalgic, in his admiration of the Moorish heritage of Spain. It is so poignant in his adaptation of an old song:

### The Moorish Girls of Jaen (Popular Fifteenth-Century Song)

I love three daughters of the Moors in Jaen:
Axa and Fatima and Marien.
Three girls dark and graceful went
To harvest olives and found them spent in Jaen:
Axa and Fatima and Marien...
Who are you, stealing my life away?
Moors once but Christians now, they say, in Jaen:
Axa and Fatima and Marien.

The subject of his plays is Granada, and all the events, characters and details that constitute these plays are in fact various symbols of Granada itself. In an interview he said:

I am totally Spanish, and it would be impossible for me to live outside my geographical limits. I express Spain in my work and feel her in the very marrow of my bones; but before this I am cosmopolitan and a brother to all. Needless to say, I do not believe in political frontiers.

Thus, his art, beyond an Andulusian symbol, acquires a universal significance, and, along with his devotion to the motherland, there is also heard the echo, "Every land is our land since it is the land of our God". But Lorca is no imperialist. He is a humble devotee of Granada, which has become a part of his consciousness; at times the vitality of life, and at times a feeling of helplessness before it. It is a passion and a frustrated desire. It is an ecstatic pleasure as well as the guilty conscience that is atoning for the guilt of centuries. The poet hears in the sounds of the earth, in its enchanting songs, the suppressed groans of the oppressed and their bitter lamentations:

Being from Granada gives me a sympathetic understanding of those who are persecuted—of the Gypsy, the Negro, the Jew,the Moor which all Granadians carry inside them.<sup>2</sup>

When asked about the defeat of the Muslims in 1492, he said, in the same interview, that the ascendency to power of Ferdinand and Isabella:

was a disastrous event, even though they say the opposite in the schools. An admirable civilization, and a poetry, architecture and delicacy unique in the world—all were lost, to give way to an impoverished, cowed down, wasteland populated by the worst bourgeoisie in Spain today.<sup>3</sup>

We are reminded of our own tragedy, and our situation may be some consolation to Lorca, since what the Moorish heritage lost in defeat, we lost in our triumph. Lorca's humiliated and devastated Spain still retained some strength, but in this blessed land of ours, what have we done to that strength and splendour! We have yet to write an elegy of it. This very Granada killed Lorca in 1936 and, wailing the loss of the same Granada, Iqbal died in 1938. And here we are talking of Spain, of the Spain the tragedy of which casts a melancholy spell on the plays and poetry of Lorca for all times. The soft melodies of Arab traditions form the background of his writings. As a tribute to this tradition he wrote

Ghazals as well as Qasidahs, and gave them the same Arabic names. Besides, as a compliment to the local mood of Andulus, he compiled a poetic anthology which he called Diwan-i-Tamarat.

We hear our own voices in the plays of Lorca. Woman and her world are his special interests. The woman in his Spain enjoys almost the same status as she does in our society. There too the girls blush when their marriage is discussed. They try to take cover behind the fan. There too bridal songs are sung with passion. The bride is seen off with great love, as in *Blood Wedding*.

First Girl:

Through the windows hear the wedding shout.

Second Girl:

Let the bride come out.

First Girl:

Come out, come out!

Servant:

Let the bells

ring and ring out clear!4

And a beautiful song greets her on arrival at the bridegroom's house:

Elegant girl
most elegant in the world,
see the way the water is flowing,
for your wedding night comes.
Hold your skirts close in
under the bridegroom's wing
And never leave your house,
for the bridegroom is a dove
with his breast a firebrand
and the fields wait for the whisper
of spurting blood....<sup>5</sup>

The maidens are modest and shy. Rosita in *Billy-Club Puppets* and the bride in *Blood Wedding* blush and seek cover before the lover and the mother-in-law-to-be, respectively. <sup>6</sup> Barren wives are ridiculed, again as in our

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society, for instance, in *The Shoemark's Prodigious Wife*, where a boy innocently tells the young wife: "My mother was talking about it the other day. She was saying: 'The shoemaker's wife won't have any children,' and her friend Rafela and my sisters laughed." And similarly they are scandalised, as Juan, in Yerma, casts serious aspersions on the character of his faithful wife, who is keeping vigils, wishing for a child: "I can't stand any more. Because one would have to be made of iron to put up with a woman who wants to stick her fingers into your heart and who goes out of her house at night. In search of what? Tell me! There aren't any flowers to pick in the streets." <sup>8</sup> Juan can't help it. He is scandalised by the whole town. And he wants no children either.

There too the women go to the holy shrines wishing for children. They keep long vigils and make offerings. There too the abodes of the "holy" are the dens of corruption in secluded places outside the cities where tramps and wayward youth hover around all day and night and help the "saints" to perform "miracles". Just as in our society, the girls are married without their consent, forced by the parents, sacrificed to dowry and custom. Rosita, in Billy-Club Puppets, grumbles to herself while she sits down to embroider:

Every afternoon—three, four—the priest tells us: You are going to Hell yet, you will die from overheat, worse than dogs. But I say the dogs marry whomever they wish and they fare very well with it. How I could like to be a dog! Because if I pay attention to my faither—four, five—I will be in Hell, and if not, I will end up at the other Hell above for not following him. . . The priests too should shut up and not talk so much, 9

Old rich men enjoy marrying young maidens. Marriage is a ritual, a convention, and a business. Even otherwise, marrying a girl is considered as doing her a great favour, for which she has to suffer all kinds of humiliations and slanders. The young wife is closely watched, as in "Yerma," by the mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law. Girls are also sacrificed to the honour of the family when they fail to get the hus-

bands of their social standing. Bernarda kills her youngest daughter and covers up the murder. She boasts: "My daughter died a virgin. Take her to another room and dress her as though she were a virgin. No one will say anything about this. She died a virgin. Tell them, so that at dawn, the bells will ring twice."<sup>10</sup> It is better to die, to be killed, than to marry a man below your class. Perfect form is observed. Feelings are spurned. All mourning must be conventional and in perfect order. "Tears when you're alone! We'll drown ourselves in a sea of mourning. She, the youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba, died a virgin. Did you hear me? Silence, silence. I said, Silence!" 11 Demands of custom and convention have become more important than the demands of life. This unnatural attitude creates a cruel puritanism. The girls are ordered to keep their heads properly covered even in their bed rooms, even when there is not a single male member in the whole household. One wonders whether the scene is set in Granada or in a town in Pakistan.

Lorca has made this suffocated female world a symbol of the frustration that prevailed in the Spain of his day. This frustration expresses itself in violence and emotional imbalance. This is a world of family feuds, rivalries and bloody clashes, where swords are crossed for a married woman. Passions run high. Even love is violent. Where violence is curbed through age-old taboos and subtle conventions, it finds outlet in devious ways and sneaky gestures. Repressed girls peep through the curtains. Blood is the metaphor for this society—and the blood may be rotten or it may be hot. When hot blood threatens attempts are made to put guards against it. But when the same blood demands sacrifice, the mother herself incites the son to an honourable death. This is a world of honour, a world where traditions are held sacred. In fact, it is a women's world. Woman is the vortex of emotional life. She plays the key role in each Lorca play. In his last play all the characters are female.

Lorca's world is a typical female world dominated by superstitions, incredulities and witch-doctors. There are good

omens and bad omens. When the shoemaker's wife rotates the chair, the shoemaker starts rotating it in the opposite direction to cancel its possible bad effect. Opening of the umbrella within the house is a bad omen. The guests depart soon if the broom is put upside down. There are petty problems and there are big problems. The women are generally high-strung. As their passions run high, so are their attachments violent. They do not believe in requited love. A girl may offer all her devotion without the beloved ever becoming aware of it. She quietly surrenders herself; the freshness of her youth withers away, but she remains steadfast, like Dona Rosita, who prefers to remain a spinster to being false in love. Matrimonial bond has the primacy, and the wife practically worships the husband like the proverbial Indian wife. The society is extremely custom bound, extremely religious and extremely emotional, where men, as a principle, maltreat women and even resort to violence.

Beside their social customs and general modes of behaviour, in apparently very ordinary things too, the Andulusian atmosphere appears so familiar to us. The vendors in the streets sell their articles with typical cries. Also there is much in Spain that is Moorish and Gypsy, and imparts it a character very close to the oriental. At the same time Spain is a European country. Study of Spanish art and history, thus, becomes very important in understanding the influences of the East on the West and vice versa. John Donne is reported to have picked up his knowledge of scholastic learning, his metaphysics, as well as his taste of oriental poetry, particularly that of 'Umar Khayyam, from whom he got his celebrated conceit of the compasses, during a visit to Spain. The art and architecture of Spain link Europe with Asia. Iqbal saw this even in the wild dark eyes of their maidens. Right from the Arabs, through Cervantes, and up to Lorca, Spanish literature serves as a bridge between Eastern and Western civilisations, and a thorough study and research in this field will greatly contribute to the study of history, art and culture.

To Lorca, Spain is a living drama, and perhaps it is for this reason that, after World War I, when European writers, frightened with life, resorted to the other-worldly haven of poetry, Lorca turned from poetry to the stage. His plays, which extend from 1919 to his death in 1936, echo the throbbings of the land. He has tried to build his drama upon the Spanish folklore, and has brought in his talent—his modern sensibility, vast reading, the experience gained in technique and thought from contemporary movements and experiments and from his predecessors—to transform the Spanish folklore into an indigenous drama. Its main ingredients are puppet plays and Gypsy songs, which he utilised with the help of latest stage techniques and literary innovations.

Of his early interest in theatre his brother wrote:

For me, Federico's theatre begins with my first childhood memories. The first toy that Federico bought with his own money, by breaking open his savings bank, was a miniature theatre. He bought it in Granada, in a toy store called 'The North Star,' which was on the street of the Catholic Kings. No plays came with this little theatre, so they had to be made up. This must have been his first attempt at drama. There was also the real theatre, to which our parents often took us, awakening in us an affection for it from an early age. I remember that once in Malaga, during someone's relaxed watchfulness, we ran off to go to the theatre. They were giving a racy operatta, whose raciness we did not savour. It must have been an object of curiosity, to an audience of men, to see two boys, very grave and well-mannered, in a box by themselves. But Ferderico was attracted by games of theatrical nature even more than by the real theatre. He liked to play at theatre and at marionettes, to dress up the maids and make them go out into the street-grotesquely dressed sometimes, or dressed as ladies-wearing my mother's or my aunt Isabel's street clothes. Price-

less at these games was Dolores, my nurse, who became

the model for the servants in *Blood Wedding* and in *Dona Rosita, the Spinster*. From her we heard our first folk-tales—those of the unforgettable 'potthumper'—at the fireside while our parents passed an evening at the theatre. I can never forget one of our servants dressed as a Moor, in towel and curtains, plastered with rice powder, gravely reciting and half inventing "The Alcazar of Pearls," 12

This background explains the spontaneity of his art and the make believe world of his plays. He did not have to learn stagecraft. It developed into maturity with his age and experience. He wrote some religious plays also, such as, an early thirteenth-century mystery play of "The Three Wise Men,":

"The scenery was painted with remarkable skill after illuminations in a medieval manuscript belonging to the University of Granada. The figures, cut out of heavy cardboard, were painted and gilded, and these entered and moved on wooden tracks placed at different levels, manipulated from the sides by Federico himself, his sister Concha, his brother and other members of the household, who also spoke the lines of the play." 13

Sometimes he liked to make sermons and in a priest's garb sat solemnly before the statue of the Holy Mother and prayed in earnest. He insisted that all present must weep at the time of the sermon. He also enacted complete plays. Drama was his life, and life was a stage to him. He had a primitive sense of community with Nature. He looked at life with the eyes of a pagan who saw spirits moving in hills, streams, flowers and animals. He was integrated with his world as a plant or a tree is a part of the landscape. He viewed his surroundings with a sense of belonging. He carried the same enriched experience through his life and permeated in his drama.

In Lorca's plays the puppeteer is a popular character. This tradition is now dead in our country though, not very long ago, puppet plays were common street entertainment here. The puppeteers bring with them a beautiful store of tales and anecdotes gleaned from folk literature, which they narrate with great skill while the puppets perform the

action. Lorca's interest in the puppets was so intense that sometimes it becomes very difficult to decide whether the characters in his plays are puppets acting as human beings, or human beings simulating as puppets. For example, in The Billy - Club Puppets when old Cristobita, who had married a poor pretty maiden, dies, his body produces sounds like "a great grinding of springs". Cocoliche remarks: "Cristobita was not a real person." And "When they pick up Cristobita, he resounds in an amusing manner, like a bassoon." His belly bursts and buttons and sawdust come out of it. Lorca was also charmed by fast colours. Songs and dances fascinated him. The characters in "The Shoemakers's Prodigious Wife" are named as Red Neighbor, Purple Neighbor, Green Neighbor, etc. These are like the characters of Inder Sabha, such as "Red Fairy" and "Green Fairy".

Folk-songs, puppets and country dances-Lorca uses all of these to create a distinguished, and, at the same time, sombre Andulusian drama, deriving its rhythms from folkmusic. These are the ingredients of a poetic drama that is enriched by a beautiful composition of varied notes and dazzling colours. His brother compared the creative use of tradition by Lorca with the art of Benavente, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1922: "Benavente is a writer of great talent, but one who creates unpoetic theatre, a theatre of manners, without national character and without great Lorca's theatre is poetic theatre, that is, it is an assimilative and creative theatre. Beyond manners, it goes beneath the surface and confronts the whole man. This is possible only in a national theatre where men are not conceived as individuals leading exclusive lives. Here they appear woven in a community. It is this cohesion which provides for great themes. Great art is rooted in life as a plant is rooted in the soil. Lorca's drama is a beautiful illustration of this truth. The art that does not have its roots in the native soil is like a balloon hanging in the air and floating at its mercy. It has no weight, no firmness. It is like the gigantic corpse in Ionesco's Amedee which grows in geometric progression, breaking through the doors and the windows.

It strikes into the street, smashes the crossing, and finally shoots up in the form of fire-works and is dissolved in the skies.

Lorca's theatre is a people's theatre. He has made some very important observations in his speech delivered on the premiere of *Yerma*. He says:

Rather than do honour to poets and dramatists, I should prepare challenges and attacks, in which we should be told roundly and passionately: 'Are you afraid of doing this?' 'Are you incapable of expressing a person's anguish at the sea?' 'Daren't you show the despair of soldiers who hate war?' 15

He then goes on to describe his poetic theory in some detail:

Necessity and struggle, grounded on a critical love, temper the artist's soul, which easy flattery makes effeminate and destroys. The theatres are full of deceiving sirens, garlanded with hothouse roses, and the public is content, and applauds dummy hearts and superficial dialogue; but the dramatic poet who wishes to save himself from oblivion must not forget the open fields with their wild roses, fields moistened by the dawn where peasants toil, and the pigeon, wounded by a mysterious hunter, which is dying amongst the rushes with no one to hear its grief. 16

As a devotee of the theatre he makes it quite clear that:

The theatre is one of the most useful and expressive instruments for a country's edification, the barometer which registers its greatness or decline. A theatre which in every branch, from tragedy to vaudeville, is sensitive and well oriented, can in a few years change the sensibility of a people, and a broken-down theatre, where wings have given way to cloven hoofs, can coarsen and benumb a whole nation.

The theatre is a school of weeping and of laughter, a rostrum where men are free to expose old and equivocal standards of conduct, and explain with living examples the eternal norms of the heart and feelings

of man.

A nation which does not help and does not encourage its theatre is, if not dead, dying; just as the theatre which does not feel the pulse, the historical pulse, the drama of its people, and catch the genuine color of its landscape and of its spirit, with laughter or with tears, has no right to call itself a theatre, but an amusement hall, or a place for doing that dreadful thing known as 'killing time'." 17

It was with these views about the theatre that Lorca started the Barraca Theatre, which ran during the days of Republic in Spain, from 1931 to 1934. It was an experimental theatre which went from village to village, showing people the plays of their interest and concerning the problems faced by them. He wanted to obliterate the distinction of the stage and the auditorium. He wanted that the character, the scene and the spectator should become one. In another interview, given in July 1936 but published after his death, in 1937, he revealed that he was flooded with ideas. He had six books of poetry ready for the press and three plays; one an Andulusian drama set in Granada, and the other "a social play . . . in which the audience and people in the street take part; a revolution flares up and theatre is taken by force." A glimpse of the revolutionary theatre is seen in The Billy-Club Puppets. Here the author himself comes on the stage for the Announcement, acting as a mosquito, and addresses the spectators:

My company and I have just come from the theatre of the bourgeoisie, the theatre of the counts and the marquises, a gold and crystal theatre where the men go to fall asleep too. My company and I were prisoners there! You can't imagine how unhappy we were. But one day, through the keyhole, I saw a star twinkling like a little fresh violet of light all aglow. I opened my eye as wide as I could (the wind kept trying to close it with its finger for me) and there, under the star, and furrowed by slow ships, a wide river smiled. Then I, ha! ha! told my friends

about it, and we ran away over the fields, looking for the plain people to show them the things, the littlest things of this world, under the green mountain moon, and the rosy seashore moon. 18

Similarly, in The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife, author comes on the stage in person, and, while he is still playing the Prologue, there is noise back-stage, and the stage direction says: "Shouts of the shoemaker's wife are heard: 'I want to come out!' " The author says: "I'm hurrying! Don't be so impatient to come out; you're not going to wear a dress with a long trail and matchless plumes; but just a torn dress: do you hear? - the dress of a shoemaker's wife." (Voice of the shoemaker's wife is heard; "I want to come out".) There come arguing voices from behind the stage. The author prepares to leave. He takes off his tall silk hat and it becomes illuminated with a green light from within. The author tips it over and a gush of water falls from it. The author looks at the audience a bit embarrassedly, and retires backward, with great irony. He says: "I beg your parden," and makes his exit. 19

He wanted to create an atmosphere of familiarity and informal communication with the spectators. If people are pleased with tricks, then tricks can also be made into theatre, but he would never reduce the theatre to trickery. He believed that people could be educated, and the artists can be given their due place by responsible and intelligent critical evaluation. The dignity of art must be maintained at all cost. In the last interview published before his death he said:

The idea of art for art's sake is something that would be cruel if it weren't, fortunately, so ridiculous. No decent person believes any longer in all that nonsense about pure art, art for art's sake. <sup>20</sup>

He was quite clear about the role of art in life. He defined it in these words:

At this point in time, the artist should laugh and cry with the people. We must put down the branch of lilies and bury ourselves up to the waist in mud to help those who are looking for lilies. For myself, I

have a genuine need to communicate with others. This is why I knocked at doors of the theatre and why I now devote all my talent to it. <sup>21</sup>

He neither believed in art for art's sake, nor in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Mr X in Dona Rosita, the Spinster, believes that "a professor of political economy cannot argue with a cultivator of roses," and claims: "I feel myself in the living polis: I am not in favour of natura naturata."22 And though he protests that "in this day and age, believe me, neither quietisms nor obscurantist ideas can prevail," he is all the time saying stupid things in the most pedantic fashion loaded with a heavy jargon that would be obscure to anyone for that matter. Lorca ridicules this presumptuous style of speech. In the same way he is intolerant of inane phraseology and meaningless flights of fancy. In Young Man, who is frustrated in Billy - Club Puppets love, says: "I used to get so tired here. Going down to the harbor, coming back from the harbor. . . . You know! I used to think that the world was a place where bells were always ringing, and that white inns stood along the roads with blonde serving maids in them, wearing their sleeves rolled up to their elbows. But there is nothing like that! It's so dull!"<sup>23</sup> To Lorca, life is facts blended with fancy. Neither pure art nor pure life. Reality cannot be reduced to a single dimension. It is a complexity of deprivations and aspirations. Artificial life has neither fact nor fantasy in it. Lorca's world is the world of the simple common folk who are not conceited and suffer no complexes. They have their usual share of misery softened by a habit of dreaming. They live a spontaneous life. Their suffering is not morbid and their dreams are not fabricated. Both emerge from life and are conditioned by the demands of life. These are the people for whom Lorca writes.

It was his passion for the people's theatre which actually became the cause of his death. Art and politics had become so entangled during the Civil War that it had become practically impossible for an artist to remain just an artist. He was dragged into the factional politics. Lorca was not a poet of

factions. He was a poet of humanity. He had associations with all sorts of people. And perhaps this innocence, the tendency to trust others, proved fatal for him. He unequivocally asserted: "I'll never be a politician, never! Like all the poets I'm a revolutionary, but a politician-never!"24 However, his sympathies were always for the poor. He was so simple and unsuspecting that he never tried to conceal his feelings. He believed that he was a poet, and it was his conviction that no one kills the poets. Intelligent people could afford illusions in those days. After the death of Lorca, whom the very first wave of fascism in Spain swept away, few poets of any calibre would now be consoling themselves with such an optimism. Lorca wrote about the common people, about shoemakers, tailors, barbers, shepherds and farmers. He picked up the characters of his drama from amongst the wretched of the earth. Even when he writes of the big houses, the subject is poverty, such as in Dona Rosita, the Spinster. He writes of spiritual, emotional and material poverty. He writes of the miserable exploitation of women in his society. His subject is oppression. He made it clear in an interview in La Vaz, a Madrid daily, on 1 April 1936:

As long as there is economic injustice in the world, the world will be unable to think clearly. I see it like this. Two men are walking along a river. One of them is rich, the other poor. One has a full belly and the other fouls the air with his yawns. And the rich man says: 'What a lovely little toat out on the water! Look at that lilly blooming on the bank!' And the poor man wails: 'I'm hungry, I can't see anything. I'm hungry, so hungry!' Of course. The day when hunger is eradicated there is going to be the greatest spiritual explosion the world has never seen. We will never be able to picture the joy that will erupt when the Great Revolution comes. I'm talking like a real socialist, aren't I? 25

This social and economic injustice becomes the subject

of his plays. The exploitation of women, the cruel class barriers and the institution of dowry, which force young and fresh girls to lead the life of withered spinsters and other oppressive customs are thoroughly exposed. Dona Rosita, the Spinster shows a glimpse into the sad plight of poor teachers. The urchins from big families insult them, ridicule them and misbehave with them. Don Martin feels so bitter and so helpless:

Since they see I am disabled, they have little respect. Now and then some pin or other in the chair, or a little paper doll on my back; but to my companions they do horrible things. They are the children of the rich and, since they pay, we can't punish them. This the director is always telling us. <sup>26</sup>

Then, after giving some details of the mischiefs that the students do to the teachers, he seems to lose patience and bursts out:

And, believe me, their parents laugh afterward at their infamies because—since we are assistant teachers and do not give examinations to their sons—they consider us men without feeling—like persons on the lowest level of the class that still wear a tie and an ironed collar. <sup>27</sup>

In the same manner, he presented the gypsies as the symbol of the mainsprings of life—of life that produces tears and laughters.—in a ballad which relates the destruction of a gypsy site on the outskirts of the city by the Civil Guards to clear a filthiness which was a black spot on the face of civilisation. Here Civil Guards were shown as an instrument of the oppressive power. A "respectable citizen" filed a suit against Lorca in a court of law in 1936.<sup>28</sup> Lorca repeatedly asserted:

I will always be on the side of those who have nothing, of those to whom even the peace of nothingness is denied. We—and by we I mean those of us who are intellectuals, educated in well-off middleclass families—are being called to make sacrifices. Let's accept the challenge. 29

He talked of humanity and of justice, and "the champions of civilisation" could not stand that. He had actually planned to write an elegy for all the victims of the civil strife—for all, above politics and factions. 30 But the fascists considered Spain as the bulwark of Roman Catholicism: "Spain had been chosen by God as the torchbearer of the Faith and the guardian of Christians in a hostile world." 31 A Falangist paper wrote: "What sin is committed by him who votes for a liberal candidate. Generally a mortal sin." 32

Excuses were sought to punish Lorca. A rumour was spread that Benavente, a true Christian, was killed in the Republican zone, although he outlived Lorca by twenty years. It was also rumoured that Lorca's Blood Wedding was exploited for political purposes, and it was staged under the title of Dynamite Wedding in a worker's club in Granada. At last he was killed in very mysterious circumstances. Valuable details of this heinous crime have been unearthed by Ian Gibson, in The Death of Lorca, the most authentic book up to date on the tragedy of Lorca. Thus, he who laughed with Granada and wept for Granada, was lost in Granada. There is no trace of his grave. He became a part of the land that he so loved. Lorca was killed by an attitude of the mind. When one considers the brilliance and promise of Lorca's generation, it is painful to contemplate the state of Spain today, where assassins can hold public offices, thinkers and artists are persecuted and a Picasso exhibition can be wrecked by fanatics in the name of Jesus Christ. 33 Lorca's plays were also disturbed by hooliganism. Yerma was condemned as immoral, anti-Catholic, and irrelevant to the problems faced by Spain. The play was stormed and the theatre ransacked. Lorca's death was actually the death of art in Spain, since no great creative achievement could be made there after him. Exactly as the Inquisition, by prosecuting Galileo, had, according to Bertrand Russell, ended all possibility of scientific investigation in Italy.

Lorca disappeared in the land to which he was devoted. Man is bound to his land in a relationship of blood. And

blood is the basic symbol of the plays of Lorca. It is a character whose presence permanently haunts the stage. At times it becomes so violent that the stage presents a scene of some apocalypse, and the heart knocks within so hard that it seems to burst out or to become silent on a sudden. Blood as a creative force finds concrete expression in children. It is realised in man-woman relationship. But this blood-relationship is caught in another bond as well. This is the social bond. the bond of traditions and customs. On the one side is the force of Nature, and on the other is the compulsion of social institutions. Tragedy in the plays of Lorca springs from the conflict of the two. The child symbol has become almost an arche-type in modern Western literature. From Strindberg's The Dance of Death to Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, this symbol operates everywhere. When in practical life, the self remains unfulfilled, its realisation is sought in the world of fantasy. The child is conceived in the mind and has only a fictitious existence, on the verbal plane. In both these plays the issueless pairs create fictitious sons. While Gunter Grass makes a very complex use of the child symbol in Tin Drum, it is conspicuous by its absence in Eliot's The Waste Land, where fertility is not possible. Thus, sterility no more remains an individual or even a family problem. It becomes a symbol of the sterility of a whole civilisation. Thus, in Yerma, the ghost of the imaginary child haunts the stage from the very beginning. Yerma itself means sterile. Similarly, in Dona Rosita and Bernarda Alba, as well as in other plays, this phantom haunts the minds. Even the old senile grandmother, Maria Jesefa, wishes to get married "to a beautiful manly man from the shore of the sea," and wishes to have babies: "Just because I have white hair you think I can't have babies, but I canbabies and babies and babies. This baby will have white hair. and I'd have this baby, and another, and this one other; and with all of us with snow-white hair we'll be like the wavesone, then another, and another. Then we'll all sit down and all of us will have white heads, and we'll be seafoam. Why

isn't any seafoam here? Nothing but mourning shrouds here." 34 In this manner she exposes sterility. In a different way Dona Rosita takes up this theme and reveals the human aspect of time. The passage of time is measured in terms of the birth and growth of children. Rosita says: "And today one friend gets married, and another, and another, and tomorrow she has a son and he grows up and comes to show me his examination marks, and they build new houses and make new songs and I stay the same, with the same trembling, the same; I, just as before, cutting the same carnations, looking at the same clouds."35 For the spinster the time has stopped, and she is reduced to a symbol of impotence and hollowness, of the hollow men of T.S. Eliot. Lorca, who considers himself a European first, and only then a Spanish, sees the tragedy fundamentally in the ruin of the Western civilisation: This ruin is diverting creative forces into destructive channels, as in T.S. Eliot water becomes a symbol of death instead of fertility. Similarly, when Rosita is about to vacate her house, it starts raining, which hides her humiliation and depravation. She says, with a sense of relief that is poignantly ironic: "It's begun to rain. Like this there will be no one at the balconies to see us leave." 36 This is the story of a decaying civilisation which Lorca sees in the Spanish perspective -the perspective that is tinged with strife and blood. In the face of conflicting demands blood excites the sentiment of honour or provokes the spirit of rebellion. In the name of family honour it becomes a guardian of traditions and customs, while in the name of love it spurns conventions. This paradoxical reaction of the blood creates the drama of Lorca. The childless woman is faithful to her husband. She is caught in a bitter conflict. She must get a child, and at the same time she must not betray. Yerma, Rosita and the shoemaker's wife are all bound by their commitments. They suffer because of the commitment; the Bride, in Blood Wedding, suffers because she rebels. Lorca has started with a matriarchal concept of society, the concept of a system of life where the woman was the symbol and spring of creative forces. The present patriarchal system has incapacitated her.

Positve productive human forces have been subjugated to social, economic and political pressures. The woman becomes a comprehensive symbol of the frustration caused by these pressures. The woman is the modern Western world's Prometheus in chains. But her silence is explosive and her helplessness menacing. Stagnant blood either corrodes the life within or, like an epidemic, engulfs others in its venom. Don Prelimplin is caught in this blood-poisoning and kills himself on the altar of the youthful dreams of his wife. This rotting blood forces slow death on Rosita and other characters of the play. It turns palaces into sepulchres, like the house of Bernarda whose walls and windows are all white, but which is all black inside. The whiteness and the blackness are symbolic. The symbol has been explained in The Billy-Club Puppets, where the young man, returning home after a long self-imposed exile, comments on the whitewashed houses: "I find the town whiter, much whiter. When I glimpsed it from the mountains, its light went clear through my eyes and right on down to my feet. One day we Andulusians will be white-washing even our bodies. But on the inside I'm trembling just a little. Oh, Lord! I shouldn't have come." 37 In the house of Bernarda the grandmother is already a nervous wreck, while the young daughters are quietly smouldering in the fire of their passion. The worst, however, happens when a man succeeds in making a breach in this cloistered world. The sisters become one another's rivals. Emotions of hatred and jealousy make them ugly. Filthy emotions and bad blood create obscenity and scandal. The girls seek indulgence in the stories of abduction, rape and violence. Once shouts are heard in the street. La Poncia, a maid aged sixty, tells Bernarda: "Librada's daughter, the unmarried one, had a child and no one knows whose it is.... And to hide her shame she killed it and hid it under the rocks, but the dogs, with more heart than Christians, dug it out and, as though directed by the hand of God, left it at her door. Now they want to kill her. They're dragging her through the street-and down the paths and across the olive groves the men are coming, shouting so the fields shake."38 A corresponding bestial image haunts the imagination of the Anglo-Saxon T.S. Eliot on the other end of Europe. *The Waste Land* evokes the symbol of the dog, "with more heart than Christians":

That corpse you planted last year in your garden, Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed? O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men, Or with his nails he'll dig it up again?<sup>39</sup>

Lorca dissects the morbid psyche that is corroding the modern Western civilisation. He takes an aesthetic view of the situation. His drama is a comprehensive symbol of the tragedy of his time, which may take the form of the sadistic pleasure that Bernarda derives from the stories of sex and crime. She bursts out hysterically: "Finish her before the guards come? Hot coals in the place where she sinned!" 40 This morbidity is also symbolic, not individual, but European, similar to the morbidity depicted by Sartre in *The Flies*, where the murder of Agamemnon by the paramour of his wife, according to Zeus, threw "a little tingling itch" through the loins of the old woman, who enjoyed it.

Lorca fell a victim to the same mentality. other crimes, he was charged with homosexuality. An army officer boasted to have "shot two bullets into his arse for being a queer." 41 This hypocritical and filthy puritanism is symbolised in Bernarda Alba, who has created an exclusive world of her own, and believes that all virtues are confined to her house. But the outside world keeps breaking through its walls and windows, and is a perpetual threat to the unreal apparent invulnerability of the house. Its security and sanctity are shattered to pieces at last. But in the name of traditions and conventions its walls are again raised on the living corpses of her daughters and their stagnant virginity. In the beginning the house was in mourning for the death of the family. The mourning had to last for eight years. In this period all the girls would have crossed the marriageable age. Now the mother has extended the period of mourning by killing her youngest daughter.

Around this house, however, life goes on, in all its vigour and vitality. The contrast provokes an atmosphere of danse macabre. This is how Lorca aesthetically conceives his horrible experiences in Spain, which he had suffered since his childhood. At last he succeeded in bringing to the stage the violent social, political and emotional drama that he lived through in Andulus. The House of Bernarda Alba is a comprehensive symbol of fascism. Here only rules, regulations, conventions and commands prevail. Feelings, desires, sufferings and aspirations are out of bounds. The forces of life are allowed free play only for the animals. When the horse, locked in the stall, kicks against the wall of the house. Bernarda shouts: "Tether him and take him out in the yard!" Then she adds: in a lower voice "He must be too hot," It is then decided that the new mare will be put to him at daybreak. But this consideration is only for the animals. For human beings, even if they are your own daughters, there is no such freedom. They are locked in rooms and bound with ropes. And if even this does not work, it becomes imperative to kill them in order to preserve the honour of the house, to strengthen the system of oppression that distinguishes the family in the society.

The frustration that Lorca was feeling, and the reign of fascist terror that was haunting him, had become his night-mare. He saw this terror in the form of a barren woman, or a callous mother. It is in fact fascism that creates sterility, the wasteland, This danger was not seen by Lorca alone. The whole world realised it, and from all over the globe thousands converged to Spain to join The International Brigade to fight against fascism. They included intellectuals, writers and artists. But the impending disaster could not be averted and within three years of Lorca's death fascism pushed the world in the flames of the most heinous war in the history of man. The Western civilisation received the worst blow to which it practically succumbed. Lorca, however, succeeded in projecting the whole drama of strife and suffering on the stage.

Lorca does not write of individuals. He is a writer of destinies of the forces operating in life. In Blood Wedding no character, except one, has a name. They are identified by their relationships and the roles they play in life. In Yerma, the son who could not be born permanently haunts the stage. In The House of Bernarda Alba, an important character is that of the head of the family, who is already dead and for whom the house is in mourning. His ghost never leaves the stage. Similarly, there are other characters who remain in the background but play a vital role in the drama, such as, dead ancestors, children not born or those forces and poetic symbols which sometimes appear as butterflies and sometimes as horses. They suddenly pop up in the imagination and leave a spell on the stage. Behind all these characters there is one more character, which is right there, in the background, in each play. It is the land-Granada, Andulus, Spain! In Dona Rosita, the Spinster it has an identifiable presence, where the names of the families, the places of social significance, tourist attractions and familiar events invoke a complete picture of Granada on the stage. In other places it appears only in symbols. These plays conjure up a mythical world, very close to the supernatural. Dance and music throw a fairy-world spell around them, which is sustained with the help of folklore. Thus, in the plays of Lorca, the atmosphere becomes a character, much in the same way as it is a character in the novels of Hardy. -

The same blood which is so venomous here assumes a different, though as fatal, form in the industrial world of New York. Here a new creature is coming to life in whose veins there runs petrol instead of blood. This is a mechanical world where men ave been reduced to hollow masks. This is the fraternity of the soulless people, undone by death, like those walking on London Bridge in *The Waste Land*. The poems of "The Poet in New York" illustrate this world. The blood that turned into poison, the blood that turned into oil, suffocates the poet. Lorca gives vent to this feeling of suffocation in a small poem "Farewell":

If I die,
Leave the balcony open.
The little boy is eating oranges.
(From my balcony I can see him).
The reaper is harvesting the wheat.
(From my balcony I can hear him).
If I die,

Leave my balcony open.

Though Lorca's characters experience a meaninglessness in life, which ends in suicide or murder, yet this meaninglessness is different from the absurd of Beckett or lonesco, since to them this absurdity is neither philosophical nor metaphysical. Rather it is a helplessness felt in an oppressive system where the everyday problems and difficulties of life offer no possibility of relief. Similarly, the sterility that Lorca makes the subject of his plays is not the sterility of Eliot's Waste Land. It is the creation of emotional, religious, social, economic, political and family compulsions. It is not destiny. It is a product of circumstances. This is not an attitude of the mind. This is the bitterness of living in an unbalanced society. The kind of meaninglessness that is associated with the idea of the absurd is created when man is detached from his roots. This Lorca experienced in New York, where the tone of his poems approaches the absurd. This is because he is not in his world. But since he is rooted somewhere, even in the inspid and colourless atmosphere of this city, he hears the "voice echoing in the valley". On the soil of Andulus where he is on firm ground neither his speech is distracted nor his mind. The absurd is the philosophy of the uprooted, not of those who are kneaded in the earth and loam of their home.

Fantasy takes a solid form in the plays of Lorca. As opposed to this, real life, the common everyday life, assumes a fictitious aspect. Lorca believed that only those who are capable of dreaming know what living is. Common people are very tough and hard-working. The tiller breaks the earth, the shoemaker, the potter and the shepherd struggle

for living every minute. But their dreams are beautiful. Poor folk sweat for life, but folklore is fantastic. Those who cannot dream cannot live either. The contradiction of fact and fancy is resolved in folklore. It is difficult to achieve in the commercial world of Albee or Arthur Miller Lorca found the secret and succeeded in creating a brilliant fusion of the worlds of dream and reality. Without getting into any philosophical, ideological or psychological nicetiles, he fully realised that only a fraction of a man's life is conscious at all. This includes trivial disappointments, failures, depravations and ordinary achievements and pleasures. A large part of his life, on the other hand, is unconscious, carrying in it obscure horrors, unfounded fears, abstract despair, vague desires, follosh hopes, fantastic aspirations and eternal apprehensions. Realistic writing is based on conscious experience of life, with a tinge of fantasy to satisfy the unconscious needs. This is possible only when the writer keeps his eyes open and his imagination unfettered. Such art, on the one hand, is the fruit of the experience of life and, on the other, a gift of the great heritage of folklore,

Lorca has created a new world of art by drawing his aesthetics from folklore, where the demands of blood go along with the dictates of reason, the reason that is the accumulated wisdom of generations—a synthesis of the culture of blood and the culture of intellect. There is a child-like spontaneity in his fantasy where everything is acceptable, where the characters cry on the stage in such a clumsy way that it excites laughter, and laugh so awkwardly that they look stupid. Lorca, thus, very easily achieves the "alienation effect" for which others have to labour so hard. His best effects mingle tears with laughter so artistically that it becomes difficult for the spectator to cry or to laugh at a particular action or scene. His brother wrote:

Laughter and tears, tears above all, run through all his poetry. Federico is fundamentally an elegiac poet. And laughter and tears are the two poles of his theatre. This explains why all his work courses bet-

ween tragedy and farce. His literary creatures, always poetic embodiments, are conceived either in a tragic sense or with the wry grimace of guignol characters. Poetry, laughter and tears are the ingredients of his dramatic invention. 42

He himself lived the common ordinary life of the simple folk around him, who "suffer and enjoy life's course as an inevitable drama." His art is spontaneous. Nothing is forced here. Neither his laughter is tight-lipped nor is there any satire or tension in it, as is seen in the work of the absurdists. It is uninhibited. His tragedy is rather grim. But so is the life around him. And when he comes to realism he says simple and ordinary things with such ease and indifference that they appear hardly credible. "They're authentic details, and seem strange to a lot of people because it's not often that we approach life in such a simple, straightforward fashion: looking and listening." Lorca enjoyed the credulity of the simple folk. He was in search of a theatre:

where people will not be shocked at the fact that a tree, for example, should become a puff of smoke, or that three fishes through their love for a hand and a word should be changed into three million fishes to feed the hunger of a multitude. <sup>43</sup>

Lorca's plays are basically poetic and musical. While music and songs provide entertainment, they also help in reaching the fathomless depths of human psyche, as in *The Tempest*. His characters too seem to have an aerial existence. He has brought colour to his art from his rich experience of life, while at the same time he has gleaned a lot from the masters of the art whose influences are visible in his creative apprenticeship and achievement.

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## THE EXISTENTIALIST THEATRE OF SARTRE

Sarter's drama is the creation of the specific conditions of this age. But it talks neither of the age, nor of the universe or of history. All these concepts have been hopelessly meshed up in the hectic world of today, and are getting obscured with each passing day. What is the reality of anything? This question has become very complicated. Even otherwise the present day world is dominated by technology in which the practical aspects of thought get the main emphasis. Sartre has attempted to propound a philosophy in accordance with the requirements of the present age-a philosophy which must not take the facts of life independent of the problems of living. It is because Sartre meticulously avoids, as much as possible, the niceties of philosophy, that his existentialist theory has not yet found an authentic place in philosophy, and many people "still see in Sartre a mere litterateur". This is in fact true of Existentialism itself which has yet to get recognition as a philosophy. In the insecurities of modern life, where simply living is a hazard, one hardly feels the urgency or has even the leisure to look for the justification of living. The most urgent need of the time is to find out how life can be made meaningful and active. This prompted Sartre to temporarily suspend dry theoretical debates in order to engage himself in using creative writings for the expression of his ideas.

Sartre is a writer who is also a crusader, and who is also directly involved in politics. To him the immediate question is not to know life in a metaphysical way, but to grapple with life. Thus, he used dramatic personages, rather than philosophical terminology, to seek solutions for the problems. Some critics believe that even the philosophy of Sartre has a dramatic element. He believes that any moment any action can determine the mode of life. Life is faced with myriads of mutually irreconcilable demands, but in a specific situation

action demands prompt decision. The situation allows no time to meditate upon the nature of the issues, or their causes, and it is not even an occasion to weigh the possible consequences of an act. Immediate action is the imperative need. Such a situation was the German occupation of France. There might have been a thousand causes of this alien occupation-historical, political, economic or military. The mental tortures experienced by Parisians in this situation can be easily imagined. The question before Sartre is how to face this situation. Should the defeat be accepted, or should there be a resistence? This is no time to go into reasons and causes. Rather it demands a decision according to an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. This is a situation of crisis, and how to react to it is the subject of the plays of Sartre. Thus, to Sartre life appears as centred around certain crises. The moment of crisis offers different possibilities, of which one has to be accepted and acted upon. The situation is very delicate and complicated and to arrive at a decision is difficult. However, the correct decision will only be the one that has been taken with complete assurance, assuming full responsibility for the consequences. Thus, to Sartre, life is an equation with almost infinite variables and only one constant, the one who has to take a decision. Man is not bound to adopt a specific course of action. He can make any decision. The only condition is that the decision is taken with full responsibility and in all awareness. In Dirty Hands, Hugo justifies his act by convincing himself that he had murdered Hoederer in a state of excitement and extreme confusion. But he cannot absolve himself of the act by taking it as a mere accident. Only unauthentic action and bad faith result from ignoring the demands of consciousness.

Sartre's drama is a drama of crisis, in the back-ground of which operates a philosophy of crisis. This crisis can be made meaningful only by the free act of man, which may give a direction to the crisis. It will be a personal decision of the subject and though others will also be affected by it, he will be fully responsible for the action. Sartre leaves no room

for excuses, nor is inevitability a justification. Man's basic condition is ignorance. It is for this reason that life appears meaningless to him. Man is doomed to live in a world of which he neither knows the beginning nor the end. And in this world he has to take important decisions. Ignorance, therefore, provides no justification for escaping responsibility. This is rather an essential condition of life. Aristotle made this ignorance the basis of tragedy, of the tragedy that reveals the greatness of man. Thus, according to Aristotle, man's greatness lies in man's capacity for making bold decisions in spite of his ignorance. If a man suffers because of ignorance, which Aristole defines as an error of judgement, he becomes the hero of tragedy, and deserves veneration. However, if he suffers because the act was committed in a state of frenzy or in the passion for vengeance, then he ceases to deserve reverence. This is how Aristotle would put it. In the terminology of Sartre we would say that the one who has made a decision with full responsibility has asserted that he lives, while the one who decides without proper deliberation or on cue from others proves that neither his action is authentic nor his life. In The Flies Aggisthus also murders as does Orestes. But the action of Aegisthus is wrong, because it is impulsive and selfish; it is committed to satisfy his sensuality and to gain the throne. But the action of Orestes is justified since he has acted with full responsibility and in view of the whole situation. It is a deliberate act. This is a positive use of freedom while the other is a negative one. Similar is the freedom of Nekrassov in the play of that name which is used only in duping others and serving his own ends.

This specific theory of action was the product of a specific situation, which provided a hundred excuses for doing nothing. Sartre has elaborated the situation in *The Republic of Silence*:

We were never more free than during the German occupation. We had lost all our rights, beginning with the right to talk. Every day we were insulted to our faces and had to take it in silence. Under one

pretext or another, as workers, Jews, or Political prisoners, we were deported en masse. Every where, on billboards, in the newspapers, on the screen, we encountered the revolting and insipid picture of ourselves that our oppressors wanted us to accept. And, because of all this, we were free. Because the Nazi venom seeped even into our thoughts, every accurate thought was a conquest. Because an all powerful police tried to force us to hold our tongues, every word took on the value of a declaration of principles. Because we were hunted down, every one of our gestures had the weight of a solemn commitment. The circumstances, atrocious as they often were, finally made it possible for us to live, without pretence or false shame, the hectic and impossible existence that is known as the lot of man.<sup>3</sup>

Exile, captivity, and especially death (which we usually shrink from facing at all in happier times) became for us the habitual objects of our concern. We learned that they were neither inevitable accidents nor even constant and exterior dangers, but that they must be considered as our lot itself, our destiny, the profound source of our reality as men. At every instant we lived upto the full sense of this commonplace little phrase: "Man is mortal". And the choice that each of us made of his life and of his being was an authentic choice because it was made face to face with death, because it could always have been expressed in these terms: "Rather death than," And here I am not speaking of the elite among us who were real Resistants, but of all Frenchmen who, at every hour of the night and day throughout four years, answered No. But the very cruelty of the enemy drove us to the extremities of this condition by forcing ourselves to ask ourselves questions that one never considers in time of peace. All those among us and what Frenchmen was not at one time or another in this situation who knew any detail concerning the Resistance asked themselves anxiously, "If they torture me, shall I be able to keep silent?4

The situation forms the plot of Men Without Shadows. One of the significant experiences gained from the Resistance was that of lone struggle. Under the oppressive hand of the enemy the oppressed feel helpless. They cannot wage a straight war like soldiers. When expression is stifled, when protests in any form, of meetings or demonstrations, are disallowed, then everyone has to fight his own battle single handed, without a friendly hand or a word of acknowledgement. The other experience was that the capacity for endurance carries from persons to person. Everyone has his own limit of patience and perseverance. The solid rock is not equally hard for everyone. The hardness of the rock for a person is determined by the height on which he abandons the ascent due to exhaustion. Some go a few paces and some struggle through half way while others succeed in going across it. In Men Without Shadows, Sartre has shown how five freedom fighters face death. One commits suicide while the other loses control over himself, and his comrades kill him lest he may reveal the secret. The other three show great courage. But they are shot dead in the end.

Determined action springs from a sense of responsibility. And the sense of responsibility is produced by awareness-an awareness that brings freedom. Sartre's existentialism is a philosophy of responsible freedom. Man builds his life through his action. And his real life is that which is created by his action. It is nothing beyond that. Man's responsibility is absolute. And everyone is responsible for everything. 5 It was this belief which prompted Sartre to associate with the Tribunal for war crimes in Vietnam constituted by Bertrand Russell. He believed that for any injustice perpetrated anywhere in the world each and everyone was directly and personally responsible and it was his duty to resist it, since neither the facts of life can be denied nor ignored. It is also not possible to evade one's responsibility. Every reaction is a decision and a decision imposes a responsibility, thus causing anxiety. In The Respectful Prostitute Lizzie wants to escape anxiety and pain. She does not want to displease anyone. She does not want to do anything which may be disapproved by others. She cannot freely arrive at a decision because she fears accepting responsibility. Therefore she gives importance to the reactions of others. As a result she loses the authenticity of her being, and is finally reduced to a mere prostitute. According to Sartre, to escape from one's own being and to live the life of others, that is prostitution.

Feeling, and for that matter, thought, is never abstract. It takes the form of action. Sartre does not consider motives and intentions as important. Action is the real thing. Poison, whether taken with best intentions or by mistake, will definitely produce its effect. After-effects and consequences follow from actions, not from motives and intentions. What is important is action. Human nature and capabilities do not matter. In No Exit Garcin seeks the assurance that he is not a coward, that he is not the type to run away from the battlefield. He wants to be a man in the real sense. He has high ideals in life. He is brave and noble. He is decent, but he seeks this assurance from outside, from another. He pleads to Estelle while others are condemning him:

A thousand of them are proclaiming 'I am a coward; but what do numbers matter? If there's someone, just one person, to say quite positively I did not run away, that I'm not the sort who runs away, that I'm brave and decent and the rest of it—well, that one person's faith would save me.<sup>6</sup>

But thus he negates his own being. No man according to Sartre can help another. Estelle consoles him:

I like men, my dear, who're real men, with tough skin and strong hands. You haven't a coward's chin, or a coward's mouth, or a coward's voice or, a coward's hair. And it's for your mouth, your hair, your voice I love you.

But as for his real worth, he is a coward since, in spite of all illusions about himself, he failed to act when the opportunity came to him and ran away like a coward. Inez reminds him that life can be judged by a single action. She says:

For thirty years you dreamt you were a hero, and

condoned a thousand petty lapses—because a hero, of course, can do no wrong. An easy method obviously. Then a day came when you were up against it, the red light of real danger—and you took the train to Mexico.<sup>8</sup>

And when Garcin brings forward the excuse that he died too soon and was not allowed to do his deed, Inez retorts:

One always dies too soon—or too late. And yet one's whole life is complete at that moment, with a live drama neatly under it, ready for the summing up. You are—your life, and nothing else.

Thus, intentions, ideals, hopes and frustrations mean nothing. What matters is the life that one lives. It determines the worth of the man. In the same manner Fred, in *The Respectful Prostitute* forwards the claims of a good family background, physical features and the medals on the uniform of the white murderer, Thomas, and finally succeeds to dupe Lizzie in the name of Uncle Sam. All these claims are beside the point. In his actions Thomas is a spoilt aristocratic youth. He is a debauch and a proud young man who can concoct lies if these serve his end. He can cheat and deceive.

The absurd had become a fad when Sartre was engaged in his philosophical and creative works. There was one thing common between Sartre and the absurdists. Both considered life meaningless. But there was a difference. The absurdists considered life hopelessly and utterly meaningless. It was a fact which could not be changed. This fact could only be known and grapsed. It could also be represented and expressed as such. But it was not possible to make it meaningful. As opposed to this Sartre has attempted to rehabilitate the logic of cause and effect through his existentialist philosophy. He admitted that there is no meaning in life, but asserted that man can make it meaningful through his action, very close to what Maria Lvovna says in Summer Folk of Gorky:

Try to elevate the chance fact of your existence to the level of social necessity, and then life will take on meaning for you.10

Sartre's stand could be summed up thus. If one decides to be, then the next question is how to be. And this no doubt is an important question. Sartre asserts that man must live a fully responsible life, not like Lizzie of The Respectful Prostitute, who attributes all her misfortunes to her ominous bracelet: "It is all your fault, you filthy thing." Real freedom is a freedom from dependence, dreams and illusions. It is this freedom which brings awareness, The first stage of awareness is man's awareness of his situation in life. And his situation is nothingness, i.e., man basically is nothing. He is free to make himself what he wills. He keeps creating himself through his free decisions and independent will. Nothingness is that vacuum where awareness grows, and on which life is built. Life is a series of actions springing from independent decisions of man. This demolishes the concept of the meaninglessness of life found in the absurd. Meaninglessness, in fact, would come in life only when some preexistent meanings are postulated, and when life fails to conform to them. But where there are no pre-existent meanings and man's absolutely independent choice creates meanings through his actions, then life goes on creating meanings continuously. Man himself creates his own meaningfulness. Thus in the existentialist philosophy meaninglessness converts into nothingness which is the ultimate source and spring of all meanings.

The other important fact is loneliness. The intellectuals of this age have made loneliness an issue. All modern literature bewails of loneliness. This is a favourite subject with the absurdists. They endure ioneliness as a curse. Sartre has made this very loneliness the foundation of living. Unless he is alone man cannot be free. But this loneliness is not due to boredom or lack of interest; it must be deliberate and accepted with full awareness. "Hell is other people" in No Exit has this implication. It is hell to live the life of others. Estelle, in this play, is obsessed with mirrors, She is always looking at her own reflections. Also she wants to see herself through the eyes of other. This is the hell. Man should live

his own life. He should carve a way of his own. Treading beaten paths is hell. The one who carves a way for himself does so according to his own awareness. The one treading the ways carved by others is subjugated to their awareness and injures his own consciousness at each step and mutilates it. To cut oneself to the size of others is like cutting one's limbs and shaping them like those of others; one's nose, ears and hands. How horrible life would become in this manner! How helpless! Sartre has given a positive concept of loneliness. It means that man's real life grows out of his loneliness. The society also rests on the foundation of this loneliness. In the *Devil and the Good Lord*, towards the end of the play Goetz says to Hilda, "We shall be alone together". Only free selves can enter into an association.

The third significant concern of modern literature is alienation. Almost all the writers and intellectuals of this century have struggled with this issue. This has worried almost everyone from Strindberg to Ionesco, and Albee, in one form or another. Almost all complain that they have been condemned to live in an alien world among alien people. Alienation, breaking up of human relationships, deterioration of values, lack of trust and the crisis of confidence have become their destiny. Their tragedy is that they seek their lives in the lives of others. They seek themselves in the crowd. Alienation has become a complex with them. They are unable to get rid of it-neither socially nor psychologically. And this feeling of alienation is further aggravated by the constrictions of this age; lack of courage and the longestablished tradition of mechanical thought. On the one side, dictatorships and bourgeois capitalism are reducing men to mechanical gadgets: Gerlach senior, in The Condemned Of Altona, says to his son:

My poor boy! I wanted you to run the firm after me. But it does the running. It chooses its own men. It has got rid of me. I own it, but I no longer run it. And you, little prince, it rejected you from the start. What does it need with a prince? It trains and recruits

its own managers. 12

The whole system has turned upside down. Machines are becoming active while men are being reduced to instruments. On the other side, is the frozen logic of Cartesian thinking. Still more fatal are the mechanical theories of Newton which present the entire cosmos as a huge machine. It was a theory which had deep roots in the western thought since the time of Pope who emphatically declared:

Nature and Nature's law lay hid in night:

God said, Let Newton be! and all was light!

According to Pope, Newton had revealed all the secrets and explained away all the big questions about life. Newtonian mechanics was applied to psychology, ethics and even religion through the theories of Hartley and others. It was supposed that life was some fixed system which could be drawn on a geographical map, or which could be reduced to figures in a mathematical equation. It is this mechanical thinking which has alienated man, not only from others, but from himself as well. And society is formed by men, not by machines.

Mentally and socially man is put on the racks which fix him like a stone and freeze him. Sartre is against this thinking and this social tyranny. He does not accept alienation. It does not simply irritate him nor does he come to a compromise with it. He wants to demolish this concept. But this is not possible by mere desire, intention or will. It demands practical steps. Racks have to be smashed up. Sartre does not want to get lost in the crowd. He wants to be a part of it, to be integrated with it. In *The Flies* Orestes has been tired of roaming from city to city. He wants to settle at some place. He who belongs everywhere belongs nowhere. Orestes strongly feels the need of belonging to someone somewhere. He longs for a home. He desires to be long to the people, as he says:

...If, even by a crime, I could acquire their memories, their hopes and fears, and fill with these the void within me, yes, even if I had to kill my own mother....<sup>13</sup>.

He finds his life meaningless. Prosperity insulated him against the petty worries of everyday life. The teachings of his tutor created in him a sort of unconcern about the world. His love for adventure released him from the bondages of time and place. The happenings of his childhood, consequent upon the murder of his father estranged him from blood relations and set him at liberty. He recalls that even at the age of seven he felt totally alienated:

When I was seven, I knew I had no home, no roots. I let sounds and scents, the patter of rain on house-tops. The golden play of sunbeams slip past my body and fell round me—and I knew these were for others, I could never make them my memories. For memories are luxuries reserved for people who own houses, cattle, fields and servants. Whereas I—! I'm free as air.....<sup>14</sup>.

He finds himself suspended, like a spider's web floating ten feet above the ground 15, at the mercy of winds.

His adventures, which now look for a place to rest, bring Orestes to a city where quite another kind of freedom prevails. The people of Argos are free of all responsibility. They live entirely in the past. Their past has possessed them like a ghost. The present has no meanings for them. They have been reduced to just a shadow of their past life. This is a city of the living dead. Their life, burdened with sin, is spent only in sorrow and repentence. The sorrow and repentence too are mechanical and are expressed in regular prescribed rituals. And when Electra, breaking the formal ritual, starts dancing, people are frightened by her rebellious courage. Even otherwise, too, a dance in the house of death appears rather weird. When life becomes stagnant in this way it starts smelling. Sartre's philosophy is a philosophy of action. Static life is filthy and frothing like a dirty pool of water, and becomes a hotbed for worms and flies, which carry and spread the filth everywhere. In Being and Nothingness, in the chapter, Existentialist Psychoanalysis, Sartre has compared life to a viscous matter. This is a state between solid and liquid condition of a substance. Life is a liquid which

flows, it has a tendency to come to a state of rest, like a slimy or viscous substance, and causes nausea:

Slimy...presents itself as a phenomenon in the process of becoming; it does not have the permanence within change that water has but on the contrary represents an accomplished break in a change of state. A drop of water touching the surface of a large body of water is instantly transformed into the body of water... it reveals a particular type of relation of being to being. But if we consider the slimy, we note that it presents a constant hystresia in the phenomenon of being transmuted into itself. <sup>16</sup>

As stagnant life turns into filthy mire, similarly the man who succumbs to life has his mind turned into a filthy mire which grows worms. If mind submits to life it is frozen and becomes a dud. In *The Respectful Prostitute Fred* says to Lizzie:

What have you done to me. You stick to me like the teeth in my gums. I see your belly, your dirty whorish belly. I feel your heat in my hands, your smell in my nostrils.<sup>17</sup>

If the mind ceases to move, and life is unable to change it and force it ahead, it gets paralyzed. The Flies takes up these very ideas. Sartre has given in this play a detailed account of the hurdles in the way of a man's life, the difficulties he faces and the obstructions between him and his nothingness. He has artistically analysed these situations. On the one side are the blood relations-the demands of a father, a mother and a sister which can influence the power of taking decisions. On the other side are the social relations, the relationships with the city and with the dwellers of the city. Then, there are political problems, intrigues, dictatorships and the difficulties created by philosophy and education. There are also economic and sociological implications. There are desires and frustrations and the bondages of beliefs and superstitions. Above all is the question of the Establishment, which is here personified in Zeus. The doors and windows of Argos are always closed. The people of other cities have abandoned

it as a haunted city. No one talks to any one here. There is only a boy who is not afraid of the strangers and does not run away. And he is an idiot boy. Public hangings are common in this city, to scare people and keep them subdued (According to Zeus, Agamemon's murder was the consequence of his being an incapable ruler. He had abandoned the tradition of public hangings). Here the dictatorial order is strengthened according to a definite plan. The children are made to feel guilty, and are conditioned to feelings of shame and penitence. Such crimes as may be a lesson to others are appreciated and their public confession is admired. The gods favour fear and despondency and guilty consciences. Zeus believes that a life of peace and tranquility bores the people and they show deterioration in morals. Zeus pays compliments to the people of Argos before Orestes:

These people are great sinners, but as you see, they are working out their atonement. Let them be, young fellow, let them be; respect their sorrowful endeavour and be gone on tiptoe. You cannot share in their repetence, since you did not share their crime. Your brazen innocence makes a gulf between you and them. So if you have any care for them: be off! Be off or you will work their doom. If you hinder them on their way, if even for a moment you turn their thoughts from remorse, all their sins will harden on them-like cold fat. They have guilty consciences, they are afraid-and fear and guilty consciences have a good savour in the nostrils of the gods... What, moreover, could you give them in exchange! Good digestions, the grey monotony of provincial life and the boredom-oh the soul-destroying boredom of long days of mild content. 18

When Zeus tells Orestes and Electra that he has come to save them, Electra protests and tells him:

You are the lord of vengeance and of death, but, god though you are, you have no right to delude your victims with false hopes. 19

But when Zeus gives them assurance for security,

Electra asks what he would want from her in return: Zeus says:

A mere trifle, what you can give most easily—a little penitence.<sup>20</sup>

Orestes warns Electra in time and says:

Take care, Electra, that trifle will weigh like a millstone on your soul.<sup>20</sup>

Orestes insists that he is no criminal and Zeus has no power to make him atone for an act that he does not regard as a crime. But the gods and the kings consider a free man a threat to their authority. Aegistheus expresses these fears:

A free man in a city acts like a plague spot. He will infect my whole kingdom and bring my work to nothing. 22

Then he implores Zeus to fell Orestes with a thunderbolt. Zeus expresses his helplessness:

Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart the gods are powerless against him.<sup>23</sup>

The only hope left to Zeus is to frighten Orestes and to make him feel that the act of his freedom is a crime. He can only delude, not subdue a free man.

Sartre also shows here that sensuality is excited in an atmosphere of oppression and terror, and people start indulging in scandals. Zeus gets hold of an ugly old woman and asks her how she behaved on the night of Agamemnon's murder when the entire city was echoing with huge cries. The old woman replies that she was alone and had bolted her door for fear. Zeus then reminds her:

Yes, but you left your window not quite closed, so as to hear the better, and, while you peeped behind the curtains and held your breath, you felt a little tingling itch between your loins and did not you enjoy it! <sup>24</sup>

Behind this assassination sensuality was also one of the motives—the incestuous relations between Aegistheus and Clytemnestra. When healthy outlet to thought is blocked, it leaks out in this filthy way, and when violence is projected as a genuine way of life, then it does express itself in the form

of sexual violence and becomes a craze-violence and sexual excesses are the direct creation of oppression and terror.

Now the question arises whether man can face these problems single handed. All these problems taken separately are, each of them, very serious. But when these press on life simultaneously, then dawns the awareness of the real and absolute issue of life, which according to Sartre is the issue of freedom. A total situation is faced in a moment of crisis and demands immediate action, a definite choice, a choice that imposes on the whole life. Such a moment creates a new world, brings about a new awareness. Thus life is created from moment to moment and moves forward. But life is not a collection of moments. It is a flow and the point at which it stops is the point of death. Life is not continual automatic recreation out of dying moments. It is rather creating life from living moments. This is an organic growth, as a man grows from year to year, and is a new man in each period of his life. Life retains its continuity. When this continity stops, and the growth is checked, it is death.

In the same way a society which stops growing is a dead society. Such is the society of Argos—dead and stinking.

No Exit presents a society where the possibility of action exists no more. The metaphor for it is hell. Here action is seen in terms of past and future. Death ends the possibility of action. And any moment may be the moment of death. This makes every moment important, and the future becomes meaningless, as is the case with Garcin who wants another chance to live so that he may vindicate his honour and rehabilitate his reputation. But action is no more possible; only excuses and justifications can be resorted to. He wants to compensate for his actions. But without action you can talk only of qualities. And qualities are the expression of others' opinions about a person. These only reflect the point of view that people have about an individual, such as, he is brave, or honest or that he is a man of principles. Thus, when we talk of life without reference to action, it is reduced to a mere catalogue of reactions of people about a particular person, and is confined to a debate on qualities. On the basis of this at the best a catalogue of objections and criticisms can be prepared.

Imprisonment is a stock metaphor of Sartre. This imprisonment can be voluntary or it can be imposed by the circumstances, even by thought and emotion. On the one side is the condemned of Altona, who is the captive of his own violence, and is caught in a guilty conscience. He considers himself the witness of his time:

Man is dead, and I am his witness. Centuries, I shall tell you how my century tasted, and you will acquit the accused. To hell with facts; I leave them to the false witnesses. I leave to them the relevant causes and the fundamental reasons. This was how it tasted. Our mouths were full of it.<sup>22</sup>

He believes that history will absolve him of the sin. But the responsibility of action does not lie on history. It lies on the individual. Franz awaits the verdict of history after locking himself in his room. He is a poet too. He records a long poem on the tape, in his defence. But this poem seems to make no progress. He tries to keep saying something every day hoping that inspiration will ultimately come. He does not know what he wants to say. He is waiting for the muses. He is of the type of poets who say nothing on their own and wait for the moments of inspiration.

In this way Franz has become a model of inaction and unrealistic living. He has isolated himself from others, but this isolation is not freedom; it is confinement. This stagnation has produced putrefaction. In this big industrialist's house, everyone is caught in a mire, in a pool of filth. Sartre has used a very stunning symbol for this—the symbol of incest. The traditionally sacred relationship of brother and sister has been polluted. This moral decay has reached such dimensions that the head of the family, old Gerlach himself exploits the charms of his own daughter-in-law to get domination over his bachelor son.

Besides, there are some other significant allusions here. Johanna, the wife of the younger Gerlach, had been an actress. She was everyone's sweet-heart and her beauty was her strength. But she devoted all this popular and abstract love to one particular person and entered into a serious

attachment.

To this extent she is a relatively free being in the house of Altona and lives a comparatively free life, though in the end she too is drawn into the mire of this house.

The Devil and the Good Lord deals with an almost identical situation, where Goetz wants to abandon the world of absolute evil in favour of a world of absolute good. But life is neither abstract, nor is there anything absolute about it. Everything has a relative significance. He preaches love to everyone and to do good to everyone, though loving everyone means loving no one in particular, and absolute good means negation of any practical good. These are abstract ideas which have no significance in the world of action. In consequence, the devotees who are honest and full of love fall a prey to the violence of others. This proves that problems cannot be solved in complete disregard of the world. The world that creates problems will also offer their solutions. Thus there is no need to dream of a paradise on the earth. This is a criticism of those revolutionaries who would launch a revolution through reason and argument alone,

Abstract thought takes the form of phantoms. A diseased mind is the hot-bed of superstitions, and creates nightmares. In the drama of Ionesco the meaninglessness of life takes the form of phantoms. But phantoms are only fought by phantoms: as in The Flies, Zeus wards off the flies by uttering certain incantations. Sartre's practical mind does not see miseries in the form of phantoms. To him these are diseases which need cure, and the cure lies in action, not in superstitions. In the same way the establishment tries to convert crime, which is a concrete act; into sin, which is an abstract feeling. In The Condemned of Altona, Franz is charged with violence, but he considers himself a sinner. Similarly, Aggistheus convinces the people of Argos that they have sinned so that they may not think of the crime that has been committed in the form of the murder of Agamemnon, and in which they too were the accomplices, as silent spectators. Aegistheus fears that if they become aware of the crime, they may seek out the criminal and bring him to account. Thus, every oppressive system tries to prepare grounds for hypocrisy and oppression under the garb of piety, higher values and the establishment of peace and security. This is the form that Zeus-Aegistheus alliance takes in *The Flies:* and the mischiefs of Goetz follow a similar pattern in *The Devil and The Good Lord*. When Goetz realises that he could not inspire people with faith and reverence, he stabs the palms of his hands and his sides, and throws the dagger behind the altar. Then he comes before the crowd and shouts:

The Christ has bled (murmurs). (He raised his hands) See, in His infinite mercy, He has allowed me to bear His stigma. The blood of Christ, my brothers, the blood of Christ is flowing from my hands. <sup>26</sup>

People kneel with devotion. On the other hand, when Orestes, in *The Flies* seeks some sign, and Zeus creates flashes of light round the stone, Orcstes is not overawed. He instead interprets the sign for himself, and decides to take over all the crimes of Argos upon himself, to win the name of "great-stealer, and heap on myself all their remorse'. He does not accept the sign as interpreted by Zeus. There are signs in the universe, but everyone interprets them for himself. <sup>27</sup>

A very good example of unrealistic life is Keen. He is a popular Shakespearean hero. He has all along lived the life of others. At one time he was Hamlet and at another Lear. He hopelessly muddles up the two roles in himself. His life is the stage. His sun is the sun painted on the screen. He gets fed up with this artificial life and wants to live his real life. He realizes that when a man is fake then everything becomes fake for him. It is for this reason that majority of Sartrean heroes are actors, Richards III or Hamlets. In order to know the reality of the world it is imperative to know one's own reality.

Existentialism is a kind of empiricism, and it is a revolt against the nineteenth century determinism in favour of the freedom of the individual. It is an attempt to activate man, the man lost in society, ideology, party, system and metaphysics. Sartre's drama is the drama of prevalent conditions,

and treats all aspects of modern life with a bold frankness. The Flies deals with foreign invasion. The Respectful Prostitute takes up the issue of American negro. The Devil and the Good Lord reflects class conflict. Conspiracies and revolutions form the subject of Dirty Hands, particularly the confusions and ideological and class problems of the young bourgeois revolutionaries. No Exit is the drama of the clash of the philosophy of knowledge and the philosophy of action. Nekrassov is a play of crookedness and political blackmail. History is the theme of The Condemned of Altona. It presents the unholy alliance of industry and fascism. Sartre has thus left out no issue of the modern world. Oppression, revolt, intrigue, espionage, scandal, the world of industry, the problems of bourgeois society, and dilettantism are all his subjects.

Sartre's object is not simply to present the issues or to throw suggestions about them. He also aims at seeking their solutions and examining the methodology of fighting them. Basically this drama is ideological, not psychological.

Sartre has used every successful formula to popularise his drama. There is fantasy in his drama as well as mythology. His plays have an element of realism as well. He is justified in this, since life is all this taken together, and since all this makes for life's complexity and richness. Sartre sees life as a work of art. He observes life as a work of art. A work of art presents a total impression at a single glance, as in a painting or in a play. Thus, when Sartre represents life he does not simply imitate. He creates. According to his existentialistic thinking life is a continuous creative act which is continuously created into life out of nothingness.

However, this too is a fact that Sartre's thinking is also class oriented, like that of Ionesco. He is not interested in common man and his problems. His is a philosophy of crisis. So is his art an art of crisis, and to him a few specific people are significant in a few specific moments of their lives. Perhaps one of the reasons for it is that though he believes in human equality, like all the western socialists, living in an advanced society, he has never directly experienced the inequality that is the destiny of the millions inhabitating the third world.

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  a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility. p. 30

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#### IONESCO'S THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

The drama of Ionesco is, in a sense, the logical consequence of the literary and artistic trends of the 20th century. When the aesthetic values of the 20th century replaced the theories and techniques of the 19th century a new aesthetics emerged. There appeared many schools of thought, such as impressionism, expressionism, imagism, surrealism, dadaism, etc. These shared at least one thing in common and it was that they rejected the logic of cause and effect and revolted against the current modes of communication. Logical Positivism and Existentialism created commotions of their own. All these theories and techniques ultimately took the form of the absurd in drama. Although the tendencies had already become visible in the 19th century, they reached their climax in Beckett, Ionesco and Adamov. Beyond Europe, their influence penetrated America, in the writings of Albee and others. Urdu literature was also significantly and visibly influenced.

Men do not appear human in the plays of Ionesco. It looks as if robots have been switched on. Their speech shows no logic and conveys no sense. There is dialogue which seems to be pointless. It is difficult to see how it started and where it led to. There does not even seem to be an occasion for it. In *The Bald Suprano* the dialogue begins just as a soliloquy. Then follow sentences which are simply uttered and are not meant to lead to conversation, that is, they demand no response as phrases in a language primer. For example,

Potatoes are very good fried in fat, the salad oil was not rancid. The oil from the grocer at the corner is of better quality than the oil from the grocer across the street. It is even better than the oil from the grocer at the bottom of the street. However, I prefer not to tell them that their oil is bad.

Thus goes on Mrs. Smith, while Mr. Smith, smoking his

English pipe and reading an English newspaper, clicks his tongue at regular intervals. It seems that they have agreed not to enter into any reasonable dialogue. The play ends on a meaningless babble of words. Reason seems to have been thrown overboard. There is no mental affinity between the teacher and the pupil in The Lesson. The one says something and the other gives it quite another interpretation. Similarly in other plays stupid and nonsensical things keep happening on the stage. The corpse, lying there for years, in Amedee, suffers from 'geometric progression', and expands fantastically, breaking through the apartment, filling both the rooms and leaving no space for the old couple to In other plays men turn into rhinoceroses, or the stage is crowded with unoccupied chairs and the orator is deaf and dumb. This is the drama of Ionesco, which seems to make no sense. The speech is unintelligible and the scenes convey no meaning. It looks like a madhouse where the insane are earnestly occupied with some very serious but apparently stupid issue.

The 19th century was swept with a revolution in thought. According to John Stuart Mill, the new doctrine:

Expresses the revolt of human mind against the philosophy of the eighteenth century. It is ontological, because that was experimental; conservative, because that was innovative; religious, because that was infidel; concrete and historical, because that was abstract and metaphysical; poetical, because that was matter-of-fact and prosaic. 1

This was the beginning, and it was marked with many contradictions. But in the century that followed man was reconciled to these paradoxes, which were easily assimilated, and no difficulty was faced in acknowledging the paradoxical nature of life. The 18th century empiricism was discarded and a fresh exploration of life started. Descartes, Bentham and James Mill lost ground. But all the ideas that emerged in this period were, almost without exception, deterministic. Ironically man, in his impatience with materialism, found himself confronted with a more formidable determinism.

Darwin's theory demonstrated biological necessity, Marx emphasised the dominant role of the historical process, while Freud and Jung revealed the psychological limitations of man. The search for freedom only led to a greater bondage. The artist revolted, and thus emerged all those isms which flourished in the 20th century. Ibsen and Strindberg in drama, and Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarme, among others, in poetry led this aesthetic revolution. In the Renaissance Francis Bacon had liberated the soul from the clutches of matter, and had thus paved the way for the advancement of science by propounding the theory of the duality of Truth. He separated science from religion:

Sacred theology must be drawn from the word and oracle of God, not from the light of nature, or the dictates of reason.' 2

As it is wrong to derive the truths of religion from the principles of science, so it is a fallacy to extract scientific truth out of the scriptures, such as

to build a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of *Genesis*, the book of Job, and other parts of Scripture.<sup>3</sup>

It was for this thinking that while science progressed unhindered, the spirit was pushed into the background, thrown out of the world of reason. Towards the end of the 19th century the spirit once again tried to force its way into the world of matter. In a way the process was initiated by Wordsworth and Coleridge. It appeared in Strindberg in the form of dreams, fantasies, delusions and hysterical states of the mind, while the French symbolists sought it in the mundane reality of everyday life; in the mean tramps, in fauna and flora, in blossoms and thorns, and in the heaps of rubbish. Thus began a new tradition in art the basic tenet of which was that reality is not visible, and that which appears as reality is not real. The artist abandoned the external world and probed into the reality within. Yeats sought it in mythology and occult sciences, and T.S. Eliot looked for it in the ritual and superstition of the savage, getting his cue from Frazer's Golden Bough, and the books of the Old Testament.

Conrad and Lawrence studied the basic human instincts and the destructive tendencies of the mind. A new tradition in drama started, and it outgrew the ideas of Aristotle, breaking new grounds in the work of Brecht. The new poetics emphasised that since there was no order in life there should be none in art, and that the artistic method of communication should be as logical or otherwise as life itself is. The absurdists went a step further. Ionesco maintained that he neither wanted to project a point of view, nor was he interested in finding answers to the issues of life:

The theatre of ideologies and theses, proposing political solutions and presuming to save humanity, actually saves no one. I have no wish to save humanity — to wish to save it is to kill it—and there are no solutions. To realize that is the only healthy solution.

He only wants to represent, to present a true picture of life as conceived by the mind:

a mood and not an ideology, an impulse not a program: the cohesive unity that grants formal structure to emotions in their primitive state satisfies an inner need and does not answer the logic of some structural order imposed from without; not submission to some predetermined action, but the exteriorization of a psychic dynamism, a projection onto the stage of internal conflict, of the universe that lies within: but as the microcosm is in the likeness of the macrocosm and each one of us in all the others, it is in the deepest part of myself, of my anguish and my dreams, it is in my solitude that I have the best chance of rediscovering the universal, the common ground. <sup>5</sup>—

This picture of life, which is personal and thus universal, is very horrible and unintelligible. The dramatist intends through this representation to prepare the oppressed and the helpless to face life with patience and dignity. The object is not to make them cry in desperation, but to rescue them from false hopes and illusions, and so to alleviate their pain. It is for this reason that Ionesco calls

his drama anti-drama. He sub-titled The Bald Suprano an Anti-Play. According to him conventional drama is artificial. It shows a false order in life. Ionesco parodies this artificiality in his anti-play. There is quite a different realism in his dama, which is in no way ideological, mystical, or philosophical. In fact it is an escape from those superficialities of everyday life which weigh heavy on the nerves. Instead of the ordinary superficial atmosphere of life an attempt is made to create a 'spiritual' atmosphere. Two basic states of consciousness are experienced:

an awarencess of evanescence and solidity, of emptiness and too much presence, of the unreal transparency of the world and its opacity, of light and of thick darkness.

It is through this realization, this new-found awareness that

the fact of being astonishes us, in a world that now seems all illusion and pretence, in which all human behaviour tells of absurdity and all history of absolute futility; all reality and all language appear to lose their articulation, to disintegrate and collapse.

The pressures of life and the spiritual atmosphere draw the mind to the contemplation of death—death, an aspect of which is silence. Therefore the two important issues for Ionesco are the fact of death and the language that communicates nothing:

A curtain, an impassable wall stands between me and the world, between me and myself; matter fills every corner, takes up all the space and its weight annihilates all freedom. the horizon closes in and the world becomes a stifling dungeon. Language breaks down in a different way and words drop like stones or dead bodies; I feel I am invaded by heavy forces against which I can only fight a losing battle. <sup>7</sup>

This is absurd, 'a wasteland of words', where man neither understands anything nor can he say anything. The conflicting demands of life paralyze the mind. From Strindberg to Ionesco the history of the development of art is a record of the progress of dialectical thought. On the one side there is the vitality of life, and on the other the inevitability of death. Love is counterpoised with hatred. The rebellious sentiment is opposed by the social instinct. The presence of others is unbearable, while at the same time the thought of isolation is frightening. The logic of the mind conflicts with the illogic of life. Solid fact is undeniable, and illusions are also important. Throbbing everyday life is as significant as the world of dreams. Human act is finite, but human aspirations and imagination are infinite. The world looks to be so simple, but it is so hard to comprehend. Sense of direction is lost in spiritual and intellectual confusions. T.S. Eliot has made two sayings of Heraclitus the epigraph of *Burnt Norton*:

Although the Law of reason is common, the majority of people live as though they have an understanding of their own

and

The way upward and downward is one and the same. This too is a kind of absurdist approach. Faced with conflicts the mind is incapacitated. This mental failure is the subject of the absurd. Man generally avoids conflict by erecting barriers of conventions and beliefs in the mind, and putting conflicting demands in separate compartments. Machiavelli separates rule from love and sympathy from terror. The ruler must be feared, not so much respected. Bentham declared that only those things were real which could be weighed and measured:

'Conscience', 'Sense of Duty', 'Pleasure in Doing Right', etc., were not amongst Bentham's springs of action; they were, to him, Fictitious Entities. 8

The absurdists want to break through these partial judgements and false notions.

Such easy formulas are no more possible for the modern man. For Joseph Conrad illusions did have a meaning; how sarcastically he remarks:

It is respectable to have no illusions—and safe—and profitable—and dull. 9

Illusions were meaningful to the ancients. To Plato the apparent world was an illusion. But this illusion derived meaning from a reality which was, to them, beyond question and which could be sought, and even found. Modern man's illusion is simple and pure illusion. There is no reality behind it, and before it are only confusions. Besides, all those props have also been demolished which sustained the illusion. Neither family bond nor the sanctity of marriage, neither parental affection nor filial submission, neither faith nor belief, neither taste nor creative pleasure, there is nothing to provide a basis for any commitment. Thus the same fundamental questions: 'What are we, and why and to what purpose?' Beckett's tramps are waiting. But waiting for whom? Illusions create more illusions, and weave a web. Man is hurled into one deception after another, like Prufrock. But when the falsehood is exposed and the magic web is snapped The Lady of Shallot finds her mirror all smashed up and life is thrown into bits, totally disintegrated. Or, if the consciousness is somewhat developed and mature, man is stunned and shocked into silence. Both the mind and the tongue are locked up. All attempts to say something utterly fail. This is what the absurd drama is concerned with.

This is not a new situation. Man has always struggled with the absurd. This was the tragedy of Oedipus as well as that of Hamlet. Aristotle called it ignorance, since in his mind, and in his society, knowledge was a clear concept, and the Greeks brought all kinds of disorder under social discipline. In Shakespeare this ignorance becomes confusion, since the society was unstable in his time, and it was difficult to distinguish right from wrong. The ancient writers, like Aeschylus, had a clear concept of the situation and represented it. Shakespeare could not represent like them, since all concepts had been muddled up. For this reason his work is explorative. He seeks 'meaning'. Hamlet is a problem play. It is itself an issue. Here Shakespeare raises fundamental questions. Ionesco is unable to pose the question, since the framing of the question requires an understanding of the pattern, however vague or misconceived. Thus Ionesco

neither represents nor questions. He simply projects. He projects mental confusions.

Historical and personal factors form the background of these confusions. Absurd drama flourished after World War II. There was the communist thrust on the one side, and the oppression of Fascism on the other. Also the western society built on the capitalistic system was fast deteriorating. Whatever little of the European civilization escaped these ravages was lost in the destructiveness of the war. Perhaps for the first time in his entire history man realized that he was not all that 'cream of creation' after all. For the first time he realised his own cruelty, savagery and bestiality. For the first time it was revealed to him that within him, deep down somewhere, there is hidden a satan who is lording over him. He could no more take pride in being superior to animals. His destructiveness, greed, oppression, fanaticism and sadism became all too obvious. The fascism of the Iron Guards in Romania repulsed Ionesco. Adamov escaped from Armenia and Beckett could not stand the heavy censorship on speech and writing in Ireland. The fanaticism of the Irish church oppressed him. Earlier, Strindberg was prosecuted for blasphemy, and although he was acquitted of the charge, he was psychologically shattered. He suffered from persecution mania which caused occasional fits of madness. Jean Gene led a miserable life in the underworld of crime and delinquency. Purely personal factors played a part in some cases. Albee was an adopted child. The parents of Strindberg were so engrossed in their own quarrels that they found no time to care for him. Hypocrisies were a torture to Ibsen, who found himself crushed in the doll house of cruel conventions. In short, all these writers were alienated politically, socially, or mentally. They were all displaced persons. They were crushed by fascism which, whatever its form, kills the aesthetic sense. When cliche becomes the code, when outworn hollow slogans assume the status of ideological precepts, faith, not faith in something or someone, but faith in the abstract is demolished. Highly cherished ideals become lifeless freaks and clutch like ghosts and evil spirits. They

assume farcical and grotesque forms and haunt the mind. These freaks then turn into the symbols of life, and man tries to run away from them. But they will not spare him. These freakish hallucinations appear as characters in the plays of Ionesco, and also provide their background.

These writers are also frustrated by the belief that the western civilization has reached a dead end, with no hope of any advancement in any direction. All its institutions have become so deeply and firmly rooted that there is no possibility of moving them from their foundations. The capitalistic system has been so entrenched that any attempt at change will bring further destruction. It may mean communism or fascism, and their iron curtains. The flow of life appears to be suddenly checked, and there prevails a frightening sense of stagnation. The social structure has incapacitated the individual. He cannot act against it. Even his thinking has failed him. But he cannot watch it complacently either. Ionesco wrote.

The "society" I have tried to depict in *The Bald Suprano* is a society which is perfect. I mean where all social problems have been resolved. Unfortunately this has no effect upon life as it is lived. The play deals with a world where economic worries are a thing of the past, a universe without mystery, in whicy everything runs smoothly, for one section of humanity at least. <sup>10</sup>

It is a dull life, with no incentives and motivations. Virtue and vice, right and wrong, all values have become irrelevant. It appears that for Ionesco good cannot exist without evil. Also, where there are no problems, no confusions, no cogitations, speech becomes redundant, and even meaningless. It seems that for Ionesco the real values are conflicts and vices. Peace and virtue are only secondary. This is a class-oriented thinking. This is the thinking of the class which has apparently no problems. But, because of this fact the class is alienated. The surrounding unrest threatens this island of peace. It causes anxiety and produces nervous tension. Such a situation has been beautifully exposed by

Chekhov in his long short-story The Doctor's Visit. The only young daughter of a big industrialist suffers from some protracted illness. Though she enjoys all comforts and peace in life there resounds all around her the noise of heavy machinery all the time. The doctor diagnoses that such an inactive life in the midst of so much activity is the sickness of the young lady. Ionesco, and people like him, suffer from such nervous sickness. There is visible in Ionesco's superiority complex, a sense of personal dignity and refinement, and a feeling of contempt for simple ordinary life. A bitterness about the trivialities of existence and an impatience about them is rather obvious in his writings, as if he considers himself to belong to a higher order of existence, to a world apart and beyond. This is one cause of his boredom. Peace and comfort are meaningful if these are for all. In the present day world there is no room for princes living in ivory towers.

This attitude carries behind it another apprehension which is reflected in modern horror stories and science fiction so much in vogue these days. The progress of science on the existing pattern will most likely turn human beings into lifeless machines. The Brave New World of Huxley In popular literature it visualises this horror. has assumed the forms of Dracula and Frankenstein. A new realization has, however, now come, though still unconsciously, that man is in fact being turned into a mechanism by the system which uses science for commercial and military purposes and wilfully ignores, even distorts, its social implications. Galileo is allowed to make the telescope only if it can be used in commerce and war, but he is not permitted to say that the earth moves, since it endangers the central position of man in the universe, a belief that sustains the class society conceived after the idea of the Great Chain of Being. The consequence is that though the Atom Bombs are produced, the problems of food, shelter and labour assume more appalling magnitudes as each day passes. These people comfortably ignore the fact that human mind has a direct dialectical relationship with the external world and

that it attains maturity through this process, which is the process of its evolution. But those who have been taught for the last four centuries that knowledge is power cannot appreciate that it is not meant to dominate others and exploit them, but that its real object is to inculcate the virtue of humility.

Beside these external factors these writers have their personal problems as well. Majority of them are displaced persons and live in Paris. The absurd is the literature of the displaced, the homeless. They see life with the eyes of a stranger. This makes their anguish more acute and different from the anguish of others. The foremost fact of their lives is that they are run-aways. Escape, to them, is a fact, and, consciously or unconsciously, they are always looking for an execuse, for a justification for escape. They cannot simply reject escape, in the terms of Camus, as suicide:

The final conclusion of the absurdists is, in fact, the rejection of suicide and persistence in that hopeless encounter between human questioning and silence of the universe. Suicide would mean the end of this encounter, and the absurdist position realizes that it could not endorse suicide without abolishing its very foundations. It would consider such an outcome running away or being rescued, but is not their self-imposed exile an escape and a rescue? <sup>11</sup>

They have no such concept as duty or commitment. Ionesco's countrymen had turned rhinoceroses, but what are the people in Paris? How is he related to them? When one feels oppressed in his own country,he is disillusioned, since the problems that he confronts are his own problems. He thinks about them, and this thought is a torture. But in a foreign country he only suffers. He cannot even feel disillusioned, because the problems are not his problems. The problems are of others. He is directly hit and he suffers, but he dare not utter a word of protest. It is a pain to live among rhinoceroses. But to live among strangers in an alien land is a torture that is absurd. Language is reduced to mere sound, as one sees people talking in a foreign land, but no communication

can be established with them. Amidst the crowds in Champs-Elysee a Romanian exile feels so lonely, so isolated, as the stage crowded with empty chairs. There is no one to talk to, no one to share and alleviate misery. Alienation turns men into objects, into things. It is this fact of 'thingification' that the absurdists experience and explore. When no contact is established, it makes no difference whether the other is a stone, a chair, a tree, a rhinoceros or a man. It is in this sense that the process of life becomes mechanical, and the spontaneity that is the soul of life disappears. It is for this reason that the characters of Ionesco lack vitality. They move mechanically. Their speech is stylized. It lacks authenticity. In the place of emotions there are calculated responses. In The Bald Suprano, for instance, the fire fighter does not arrive because there is a fire. He just comes as of habit. He is all the time preoccupied with the idea of the fire. Similarly, like the clicks of Mr. Smith, the clock in his room just ticks on. It does not tell the time. In short, all activity is just for the sake of activity. It means nothing. Even where there are real human beings, and not chairs, rhinoceroses or corpses, they are hardly human in the plays of Ionesco. They have all been transformed into objects. Even feelings and thoughts assume shapes, and it looks that man has been submerged in the world of objects. Ionesco's theatre is thus called the theatre of the objects. This is the most tragic fall of man. According to D.H. Lawrence, man's turning into things is pornography:

Passion and instincts—you want them hard enough, but through your head, in your conscious nose. It all takes place in your head, under that skull of yours. Only you won't be conscious of what actually is: you want the lie that will match the rest of your furniture.<sup>12</sup>

As a consequence, when this world of objects succeeds in establishing a relationship, it is never human relationship of love and sympathy. It is always a cruel relationship, that of the oppressor and the oppressed, of the powerful and the helpless. Communication becomes impossible, since everyone is locked up within his own self. There is no collective

thinking. In such a situation ideas cannot be conveyed to the other mind. But the other mind can be killed. Thus educational institutions turn into the slaughterhouses for the young. The relationship between the teacher and the taught is turned into one between the murderer and the murdered in *The Lesson*. The distinction between the examination hall and the concentration camp is practically obliterated.

Modern man's experience of the external world is quite different from this experience of the ancient man. A pagan never felt himself alone. He saw spirits in hills and streams, and in the fauna and flora. His experience was like that of the infant, who found the moon talking to him, and who made friends with his dolls. Wordsworth's 'The World is Too Much With Us', is a lamentation at the loss of this world which was so full of life. The absurdists also try to see the world with such infantile eyes, and thus regression becomes one of their distinctive traits. One reason for it is that they do not consider that man has erred and that the error can be rectified. They believe the human tragedy to be the limitations to which man has been conditioned. He sees the world according to his limited vision in which he has been hopelessly imprisoned. As a result, he is repeatedly disillusioned. His self-esteem is repeatedly hurt and his ego is bruised. He finds it difficult to face the hysterical states of the mind, which keep upsetting him, and which suddenly emerge from the void like spirits and ghosts. Conrad has used the archetypal symbol of the sea for life in Lord Jim. Under the calm surface of the sea there float perilously abandoned ships,

that would capsize in a squall and float bottom up for months—a kind of maritime ghoul on the prowl to kill ships in the dark. Such wandering corpses are common enough in the North Atlantic, which is haunted by all the terrors of the sea-fogs, ice-bergs, dead ships bent upon mischief, and long sinister gales that fasten upon one like a vampire till all the strength and the spirit and even hope are gone, and one feels like the empty shell of a man.

These apprehensions, these lurking fears, assume concrete shapes and acquire force, movement, and even a sinister will of their own. The psychologists use such symbols for the description of the unconscious. The absurd drama is the drama of these phantoms. Even Conrad saw the absurd in these as, to the description of vague horrors, he adds the comment that all this 'appeared an utterly aimless piece of devilry'.

Absurd drama is the drama of such violent fantasies, of dreams and hallucinations, which keep popping up from time to time by their own power and will and follow a logic of their own. The logic of life is no different either. This is the relationship of the microcosm and the macrocosm. Mind, however, does extract meaning out of life, a meaning which in fact is not contained in life, rather negates it. Realism reduces characters to fictitious entities, and the conventional theatre is no more than puppetry in which characters are meticulously rounded up and made faultless with effort and skill. They are rendered into particular forms according to set theories, and are given appropriate style, and mannerism. In the words of Zola, these are

fictitious characters. . . symbols of virtue and vice which have no worth as human data  $^{13}$ 

They follow, not life, but Aristotelian idealism which demands appropriate plot and characters. Conventional drama is thus an artificial rendering of life. The absurdists attempt a true one. They try to achieve this end through their anti-play, with its anti-hero. In traditional tragedy, the hero represented the best of the spectator, engaging all his sympathies or at least his sense of a shared humanity. The fate of such a hero was tragic because the spectator saw reflected in it his own condition and that of all men. In "absurd" dramas, however, the "hero" or "anti-hero" is something less than a person. The spectator sees at once that he shares with this "man" no real human bond. This causes the spectator to feel superior to the anti-hero and on occasion even to feel contempt for him. The spectator is aware of a dimension of life beyond the limited scope of the

anti-hero, and the latter's posturings and predicaments thus become ludicrous or comic instead of tragic. The spectator, in short, does not see anything of himself or of universal man in the pitiful anti-hero.

Drama, which was religious in the ancient times, became explorative and analytical in the age of Shakespeare, and turned into a programme by the time it reached Ibsen and then, through Sartre, to Brecht. It was no more a vehicle of prevalent thought. It now attempted to represent human struggle on the stage, and turned into an advocate of new ideas. Ionesco challenged its role of a preacher. To him it was 'the exteriorization of a psychic dynamism'. Thus drama passed from being the altar or the pulpit to a state of dreams and fantasies.

Individual liberty has been a serious problem in the modern western society. The world of bureaucracy, sectarianism and conventional constrictions is very suffocating. The individual seeks emancipation. But what kind of emancipation? There is a freedom that Caligula achieves in Camus' play of that name, which is freedom from moral responsibility, from human sympathy, from all humanitarian considerations. He feels that he has got freedom-the freedom to oppress, to indulge in lasciviousness, to betray friends. On the other hand, there also exists a responsible concept of freedom; that is, freedom imposes certain restrictions, for the promotion of human good. On the question of individual liberty the absurdist position is dubious. It is rather negative. They only know what they do not want. They do not say what they want. They seem to suggest that they want to throw away the burden of others. Ionesco believes that it is human consciousness that alienates man from man. Animals and trees do not suffer this alienation. It is consciousness that alienates man not only from others, but also from his own self. In The Bald Suprano, it is after long dialogues that Mr. and Mrs. Martin realize that they are Mr. and Mrs. Martin. Loss of personal identity is the consequence of alienation. Neither history remains meaningful nor language significant. T.S. Eliot also sought meaning

in history and in a revitalized language in his poetry and criticism. In the absence of identity the very concept of action becomes absurd.

These were the circumstances which created the anxiety and the pain of the modern western world. But art, however rebellious, has its roots in tradition. Though the absurdists have rejected the logic of the conventional theatre, they have tried to utilize the conventions of the stage right from the Greek practices to the modern techniques. The most important convention of the Greek theatre was the use of the mask. In an absurd play the actors do not put on the masks, but they act like puppets, in a deliberately mechanical way. Their gestures, their speech are all mechanical. They allow no emotional reaction, as if they are not human beings, but just wooden figures. This mechanical style of acting is also a tradition of the silent cinema. Another convention of drama was the use of gesture and physical movement as means of communication in place of language. This was also popular in silent movies. It was very successful on the Elizabethan stage, which also developed, and carried to perfection in Shakespeare, the role of the clown. In the beginning regular professional clowns entertained spectators during the interludes in a play. They presented small skits. Later main characters were assigned this role. Hamlet, Lear, Richard III and Shylock are such characters in Shakespeare. They are clowns and tragic heroes at the same time. Conventions borrowed from medieval drama are allegory and personification. Thus men turn into rhinoceroses. The murder in The Lesson is presented in the form of a ritual, borrowed from religious drama. The Bald Suprano uses the chorus, which is formed when the entire cast is assembled on the stage. All these conventions have been used by Ben Jonson in his classical drama in all seriousness and fidelity to the form. The absurdist drama has also used all these conventions. Also, scenes of ecstasy and frenzy are effectively modelled on Bacchanalia. Besides, writings for children and nonsense literature such as Alice In Wonderland have provided much of the subject, as well as the technique to the

absurdist playwright. These stage conventions have helped the dramatist in many ways. In the first place, the use of familiar devices has saved the unfamiliar subject from immediate total rejection by the public, and assured acceptance for the new experiment. Secondly, inadequacies of language forced the writers to look for other means of communication. and valuable explorations were made in this field. Finally, visual action was discovered to be an effective alternative for thought and speech which were becoming more and more incomprehensible in a fast disintegrating world. Thus came into existence a pictorial language of the stage, in which speech found place as a conjunction between one silence and another. All these experiments in techniques of communication make one thing very obvious, and it is that these writers are keen to reach the public. They want to be heard and understood. This convincingly proves that whatever opinion we may hold of the absurd, it is definitely not misanthropic.

One disturbing revelation that the study of the absurdists makes is the realization that though ends and objects are rapidly losing significance in life, general efficiency is tremendously increasing. Ours is an age of techniques. The real object of science, that of human welfare, has been completely lost, while its capacity to work and its technical capability have been greatly increased. This imbalance is disastrous. It is for this reason that science produces the Atom Bomb, and the stage creates the absurd. But it is not all that dismal either, and the conclusion must not be to put a check to scientific progress. Man must now prepare himself for greater responsibilities. And once he realizes what he has to do, means will be readily available to him to practically realize his ideas through the progress that he has made, and would make, in science.

The absurd has obliterated the distinction between tragedy and farce. There is essentially no difference between them. They represent different points of view, different attitudes to life. Tragedy is a serious representation of life, while farce is a representation of the nonsensical and the illogical. When you feel the pinch it is tragic, when you see its ridiculousness it appears a farce. Thus Shylock and Richard III are tragic as well as farcical characters, depending on how you look at them. Whether man is tragic or ridiculous is difficult to decide. This 'Poor, bare forked animal' of Shakespeare, who is not as beautiful as a butterfly, according to Stein of Lord Jim, is also Oedipus and Timon. Tragedy is created through sympathy, but when sympathy is withdrawn what we get is the comic. There is not 'the thickness of a sheet of paper' between tragedy and farce. The absurdists do away with this thickness altogether. For this reason their drama looks more like the caricature of drama. This helps them in achieving the effect of alienation, which Brecht and others could create only with great effort and technical skill. Here the spectator is never lost in the spectacle, since it apparently has neither logic nor sense in it. It appears all so chaotic. This also pays commercialy, since the comic element can be exploited to create interesting dramatic situations.

So far as realism is concerned, it is a convention of the stage, a style. Similarly a departure from realism is a style. Symbolism is such a convention. Complete realism is impossible in art, since it is the fine screen of art, its medium, that separates it from life. The effigies in The House Of Wax look beautiful only till one discovers that these are actual dead bodies coated with a thin layer of wax. Murders on the stage create no horror because these are murders on the stage and not actual murders. Realism beyond a limit will cease to be art. Similarly, a rejection of realism carried to the limit where whatever is shown on the stage looks bizarre and belonging to quite some other world, will make art unintelligible. There will be no communication. Art will lose credibility. As a matter of fact the screen between the spectator and the spectacle should be so fine that it shows the contours of life as close to reality as possible, creating at the same time an impression that whatever is happening before our eyes is a reflection on the screen, an impression created by the art, not an actual happening, as it takes place in everyday life. Actually the debate between the realists and the symbolists is not about creating a representation of life or not. The issue is just about the thickness of the screen between the spectator and the spectacle. This is not a theoretical debate. It is a matter of taste and of practical efficacy, and a question of style. The choice only defines the artistic sensibility.

There prevails an opinion in certain quarters that the absurd is already dated. Adamov and Albee have given up the game of symbols, and have reverted to realism, (though it will be very difficult to define the absurdists as a school, it being a matter of taste and style, as already suggested; at least Albee will be found to elude the definition). However, the matter is rather simple. The absurd drama is still absurd. But now it has become quite familiar to us. Waiting For Godot is no more the tantalizing unintelligible play as it appeared to its earliest viewers and readers. The novelty of the experiment had stratled the people. They could not imagine that drama could be so nonsensical. But it appears no more bizarre now. It does communicate some meaning. Today people go to see such a play fully prepared to encounter nonsense in it. They are thus neither shocked nor disappointed. It seems to have become quite obvious by now what the absurdists are up to. Therefore effort is made to appreciate their point of view. Besides, their symbols and techniques have also become quite familiar, and it is not at all difficult to catch the suggestions that underlie their art. They are not the least difficult to comprehend. Now it is the absurdists who should in fact protest that even symbols are becoming fossilized like language. The symbols which looked so incomprehensible and pointless, have now become meaningful, the exclusive style has become a convention.

The absurd drama has made appreciable advance in technique by creating a pictorial language of the stage. This is the language of drama, which follows the logic of drama. These dramatists have made valuable experiments in the exploitation of the dream world. They have supplemented the work of the psychologists in their analysis and interpretation of drama. They have thus opened immense possibili-

ties for the development of the art of the stage. They have rescued drama from didacticism and simple entertainment, the two unhealthy trends encouraged by the age of conflict. A play is posed as a challenge, and discourages ratiocination, sermonizing and maudlin emotional indulgence. The spectators are forced to observe and analyse, and take a position on the issues.

But the issues that these dramatists raise are not very clear. They are confused, and the confusion is rooted in their class background. In fact the absurd drama is concerned with the problems of the western bourgeois, with one privileged class having apparently no problems. The basic problems of employment, shelter and food pose no serious difficulties. Technologically advanced seciety has solved many other problems, such as transportation, education and health-care. Even nepotism and conventional forms do not press them so hard. Perhaps we cannot appreciate their problems. They are bored; we are oppressed. They can possibly have no idea of the misery of those who suffer deprivation. We, on the other hand, cannot even dream of ever seeing the problems resolved. Common everyday problems are no problems to them. Their worries are metaphysical. The western bourgeois writers complain of loneliness, of isolation. Our problem is that the society is too much concerned about us. We are checked, questioned, censured at every step; how one dresses, what hair style one likes to wear, are everybody's concern. Surely, there are the oppressed like us in the West too. But these plays are not for them.

The absurd has now become a genuine creative form in art, and its prospects are bright, but in the future its subjects will not be the same as those of Beckett and Ionesco. It will not represent a particular class. It will project the problems of the common man.

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# ALBEE'S AMERICAN WALPURGISNACHT AND THE EXORCISM

With Edward Albee the confusion and chaos of the European stage appeared in the United States of America. Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter, beside others, gave a direction to European drama, familiarised it with the new problems of life and moulded it according to the needs of the modern age with the help of new techniques. Socially as well as politically America has passed through a different process as compared to Europe. As a result, the disastrous confusion through which art and learning passed in Europe was hardly experienced in America. It is true that the United States is itself the creation of a revolution, but that revolution is now a thing of the past. America has always been an island across the oceans, a haven, where not only boats and ships found access difficult, even social, political and intellectual upheavals of Europe took a long time to reach. Thus, America has been as far away from the anxieties of modern Europe as New York from Paris. But the world is shrinking fast and the distances spreading over occeans have all but disappeared due to the ever-developing means of communication. Albee has distinguished himself as a playwright of the "new world" who has seen the sinister influences of the present times insidiously creeping into the American life. These undercurrents have so far been imperceptible, hidden under an apparently calm surface. But the disturbance is now becoming visible here and there. The deceptive assurance of American life, the proverbial domestic peace and security, the bliss of conjugal love, the citadels of beliefs, convictions, traditions and conventions, all look as fragile as a house of cards in the plays of Albee. The world is undergoing a radical change. And this worries the artist. He watches with horror the cherished old values crumbling down, and wishes this dark night of turmoil to end. He does not consider this to be the destiny of man, as the absurdists of Europe do. He believes that this calamity is brought by man upon himself, and that man himself will overcome it. But the dawn that will follow this dark night is only vaguely conceived. Its features are not yet quite clear. Like Agnes, in *A Delicate Balance*, he has braced himself up to fight out the epidemic, though not without some scepticism:

Or shall we burn them out, rid ourselves of it all.... and wait for the next invasion. ?<sup>1</sup>

The conservative and the convention-bound, or those who lack the nerve to face the facts and turn away from horrible thoughts and seek refuge in the world of fantasy are Albee's special victims. He tears them to pieces. His first short play he called The Zoo Story. (It is no mere chance that its premiere could not take place in New York, and it was first staged in Germany). This zoo is the contemporary American society in which different animals are confined to their separate cages. The metaphor actually haunts the mind of the average American. In the New York Zoo the visitors are not only conscious of this fact, they are also specifically reminded of the kind of society they are living in. In the section of the Zoo that houses the gorillas, in the middle of half a dozen cages, there is a cage which has before it a smoked-glass screen as tall as a man. Looking very closely through it a dim image seems to be moving behind. One gets the impression that there is some very ferocious ape behind the screen. While scanning the screen the eye catches an inscription on it, which reads something like this:

Here you are watching the most ferocious animal that has wiped out of existence the entire species of other animals.

Looking back into the screen it becomes clear that this is just a mirror which reflects the image of the viewer. This is the guilty conscience of America. Its own image in its unconscious is so horrible. Albee has tried to project this image

on the stage. This metaphor makes two significant revelations. One is that the walls of the Zoo are raised by man himself, and the horror and bestiality arrested behind these walls reflect man's ferocity and bestiality. The other, that so much frightens the champions of society, and the suggestions of which are scattered throughout the plays of Albee, is the serious apprehensions of what may happen to the society if these walls are razed to the ground. This is so because the society is not based upon mutual love and sympathy. Its foundations rest on mistrust and rivalry. If this inner wilderness breaks through the walls, then how each will pounce upon the other. Such apprehensions have found expression in Draculas, Frankensteins and King Kongs. These characters, which are the embodiments of unconscious fears, have been haunting the modern western civilization for quite some time. This is the ideal society of the Free World which pretends to be the custodian of all noble values.

The besiality of this human jungle is revealed in human relationships. In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry's bestiality is revealed, in his friendship with the dog. It is an ambivalent love-fear relationship. He has succeeded in creating an understanding with the dog and he claims that he "knows" the dog. He considers Peter a vegetable, but in his dying moments he says to him;

And Peter, I'll tell you something now; you're not really a vegetable; it's all right, you're an animal. You're an animal, too.

Similarly Tobias, in A Delicate Balance, tries to establish a relationship with a cat. Albee sees this bestiality in all relationships; in man's relation to man, to woman, to the family, to society and to God. Friendship, parental and filial attachment, business deals and domestic frictions form the subjects of his plays. He analyses them separately as well as in their total context. He seems to have arrived at the conclusion that all these relationships are sustained only by habit and custom.

Strindberg had seen the cleavage threatening these

relationships. The similarities between Strindberg and Albee at various levels are neither deliberate nor unconscious imitations. In fact as Stringberg saw the storm brewing under the calm surface and complacent assurance of European life, so did Albee see these dangers threatening American society. Albee exposes a world of self-created delusions and false fortifications which he wants to demolish. The characters of Stringberg confine themselves within the prisonhouse of their ego. A similar process is seen operating in the world of Albee. The world is changing so fast that the individual cannot keep pace with it. The social texture is woven so delicately that the destruction, or even dislocation, of a single thread may destroy the whole fabric. In Strindberg's The Bond people are shocked to learn that "a Dalecarlian girl has started bricklaying", and "an old woman has set upon her sick husband and beaten him". The Constable is totally confused about the new accent in the speech of his wife:

Yes, yes, these are queer times. The women seem to have gone mad. My old woman has a way of saying that if there were justice in the world I should bear children—as if the Lord didn't know how to make his own creatures.<sup>2</sup>

This is a man's world which can be held together only by the domination of man, and in which the woman, as Ibsen saw it, is only a doll, a piece of decoration in the house. Ibsen has shown, in A Doll's House, that if this doll speaks out, demands its rights, the society will be threatened with a disastrous confusion and the peaceful home will be thrown in a quandary. It is for this reason that society is always at its guards against any demand for rights which must, however, be conceded in principle. Rights are thus reduced to slogans. In The Lady From Dubuque Elizabeth says:

We are not talking about the rights we pretend we give ourselves in this bewildered land of ours-life, liberty, and the pursuit of the unattainable—though we may be learning our limits—finally—here in the ...last of the democracies. Or just about.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in a situation where it is not settled how much freedom anyone has, there even individual identities cannot be established. Identity, whether individual or national, can be determined only in the context of a system of rights and privileges. In the absence of rights and liberties identity is reduced to sartorial habits. For example, in the same play, when Oscar puts on the clothes of Sam, he becomes Sam. Identity as well as values, all are superficial. In the words of Elizabeth:

all the values were relative save one. . 'Who am I?' All the rest is semantics—liberty, dignity, possession.4 Identity in this situation becomes a matter for bargaining. Thus Elizabeth says to Sam:

You have a woman upstairs. You say she is your wife: I say she is my daughter. Surely we can

Nothing is right and nothing is wrong. Legal husband and insistent mother have equal rights. This is the reality of a social code which is a travesty of all values and which determines all individual as well as collective rights—all of which are practically negotiable.

Albee realized that the laws created by the society were weak. The most important of these laws is the sanctity were the home. Any intrusion in the privacy of the home is a crime. But the outside world keeps breaking in on one pretext or other. In A Delicate Balance, when the friends come as guests, they come like an epidemic and grab the hosts like ghosts. Fear and confusion enter the house with them. But these are no hallucinations. These ghosts are real, in flesh and blood, quite familar, assuming the aspects of friends and relatives. These are not the ghosts of Ionesco. This is another difference between the artistic attitudes of Europe and America. The atmosphere outside the home is haunted and no walls can keep that out, since beside sanctity of the home this society has other values too, such as blood relationships, friendships, manners and morals. The foundation of the home primarily rests on man-wife relationship. But the man and the wife live in a society where there are so many demands on them. Domestic peace and privacy are denied to Tobias and Agnes, in A Delicate Balance. Claire, the sister of Agnes, could establish no relationship with any man and remained unmarried. She becomes a burden on her sister and brother-in-law. Addicted to heavy drinking and slovenly in habit she is very difficult company. Their own daughter, Julia, has had her fourth unsuccessful marriage. She is thrity-six. She has now returned to a house which belongs to others who have come there as friends. The invasion of the stronghold of privacy is complete. Friends, relatives and guests have equal claims. Tobias and Agnes cannot throw anyone out. The friends argue that theirs is a relationship of forty years, and "Does not forty years amount to anything?" Tobias believes that all claims must be honoured:

...If that's all Harry and Edna mean to us, then ..... then what about us? When we talk to each other.... what have we meant? Anything? When we touch, when we promise, and say...yes, or please .... with ourselves? ...have we meant, yes, but only if...if there's any condition, Agnes; Then it's...all been empty.<sup>6</sup>

If friends mean nothing, if relations mean nothing, then no one means anything. All relationships rest on the same trust, on the same system of values which make the foundation of friendship. If friendship ends all that trust will end, the whole system of values will come to a nought. Thus, no intruders can be thrown out, and

like Poe's raven, Harry and Edna become symbols; they represent the inevitable march of spiritual aridity into the most sarcred oasis in the modern wasteland—the home.<sup>7</sup>

While Agnes and Tobias are absolutely confused, Claire suggests that the plague can be got rid of by burning. Agnes had already said as much:

They have brought the plague with them. . .mortal illness. . .Ten centuries ago—and even less—the treatment was quite simple. . .burn them. Burn their

bodies, burn their houses, burn their clothes—and move to another town, if you were enlightened. But now with modern medicine, we merely isolate; we quarantine, we ostracize—if we are not immune ourselves, or unless we are saints.<sup>8</sup>

It is not the individuals who have become the disease. These are the sinister forces in life, created by the society, which have turned the friends into a plague. Agnes concludes her speech on this note:

your night-long vigil has been over the patient and not the illness. It is not Edna and Harry who have come to us—our friends—it is a disease.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Lady From Dubuque* the list is further enlarged, and includes so many intruding strangers. Oscar protests to Sam:

Who are you calling? The police? What will you tell them? What will you tell them we are? Thieves? Murderers? Relatives come to call? House inspectors? What?<sup>10</sup>

This is what happens to the individual when the community is as much needed as it is spurned.

The stranger causes a breach in the cloistered world of the house and creates a few ripples in its stagnant atmosphere. When in *The Dance Of Death* Kurt causes a crack in the shell of Edgar's isolation, an atmosphere of trust is created as a result of the new gained consciousness in a world where relationships have come to a dead end. When in their usual quarrels Edgar and Alice suggest to each other to have some other partner, the Captain reacts;

Thanks. That was tried to our mutual dissatisfaction. But what was interesting in the experiment was how happy we were as soon as we had a stranger in the house—to begin with.<sup>11</sup>

In A Delicate Balance the intrusion of strangers makes people aware of their rights, responsibilities and privileges, while in The Lady From Dubuque the arrival of Oscar and Elizabeth makes Sam aware of his helplessness and of the faithlessness of his friends. The stranger's intrusion breaks

the monotony of life and helps in creating a freshness of approach to the apparently hopeless situation. One then realises that life is no fixed pattern, and it is not a game of destiny. It becomes clear that everything has a relative significance. Because of their iconoclastic influence the strangers naturally inspire fear. They become a threat to the world of securities created by habit and custom.

One way of warding off this threat, of escaping the disease, is to harden the shell of one's isolation. Such seclusion will bring some assurance to a man living in a world full of exploitation and fierce competition. He may take cover under a sense of superiority. There is no need to mix with people since "Everyone is scum". To the Captain, in The Dance Of Death, everyone is a scoundrel:

the Customs Officer, the Postmaster, the telephone girl, the chemist, the pilot,—the what-do-they-call—him, the Alderman—scoundrels, the whole pack of them. 12

Similarly to Martha all are "Flops", This feeling gives tremendous boost to ego, and the Captain exclaims, "I am, therefore God is", and Martha, in Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? claims that she is "the Earth Mother". This is the same kind of security that Loman and his sons, in The Death Of A Salesman, create by weaving illusions around them. However, according to the Captain, in The Dance Of Death:

But there comes a moment when the ability to create in imagination, as you call it, fails. And then reality stands out in all its nakedness. . That's terrible. 13

A disintegrating society is like a ship broken into pieces to which the shipwrecked people cling seeking security in lonely islands. Albee made a study of this state of isolation in *The Zoo Story*. The lonely man develops a fear and distrust of others. He suffers from persecution mania. In this play the dog becomes an embodiment of this fear. Jerry is scared of him, and he too starts barking on seeing Jerry. Jerry decides "to kill the dog with kindness". He befriends him, and brings the meat of hamburgers for him. The dog

eats the meat and snarls. In desperation he poisons the meat. The dog falls seriously sick, but recovers: After that they become friends, and Jerry concludes:

I have learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, create any effect beyond themselves; and I have learned that the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotions.<sup>14</sup>

Sympathy and love are easily exploited. The oppressed can be easily incapacitated through appeals to humanitarian sentiments. In *The Dance Of Death* the Captain believes that love as well as sympathy are used as weapons. Hate then becomes a weapon against cruelty. The revolutionary Palestinian poet, Nazir Kabani, says:

O Merciful God, grant us Your forgiveness.

For after this day, we can no longer be innocent; After this day, we must break Your law.

After this day, we must kill without mercy. (Al-Fatah).

Love and sympathy may be offered, but rights can never be conceded. And Jerry's love-hate formula is a very delicate affair. Jerry is not sure of his plans about the dog, and wonders:

was trying to feed the dog an act of love? And, perhaps, was the dog's attempt to bite me not an act of love? 15

But when he applies the same formula to men, a strange situation is created. What is love and what is sympathy is not so ambiguous here, since Peter is not an animal. He belongs to the same human society with Jerry, though their two worlds are so different that one is not aware of the way the other lives. Jerry tells Peter of his life in the flat, He lives on the fourth storey of a four-storey brownstone rooming house. His neighbours are a coloured queen who has rotten teeth and plucks his eye-brows, a Puerto Rican family, and someone in the front room whom Jerry has never seen. The ugly, fat, lascivious landlady, who cries all the time, lives on the third floor. He feels so lonely, so unfulfilled.

There are, he tells Peter, two picture frames in his room, with no pictures in them, since his parents are dead and he has forgotten them. Peter is wonder-struck and exclaims:

It's so. . .unthinkable. I find it hard to believe that people such as that really are. 16

This is the American Zoo in which the lodgers of one cell do not know those who live in the other cages. Human contact has becomes so difficult. Jerry has to work so hard

to get in touch with Peter:

Oh, Peter, I was so afraid I'd drive you away (He laughs as best as he can). You don't know how afraid I was you'd go away and leave me. And now I'll tell you what happened at the zoo. I decided that I would walk north...northerly, rather...until I found you.. or somebody and I decided that I would talk to you...I would tell you things...and things that I would tell you would...Well, here we are. You see? Here we are. But...I don't know...<sup>17</sup>

In *The Zoo Story* the delicate contact turns into the sharp edge of the knife on which Jerry impales himself, suggesting, as in Ionesco's *The Lesson*, that any contact in the present social set-up will only be a destructive contact where teaching turns into "murdering the innocents".

Thus, an attempt to fight the external dangers and overcome the demons arising from within leads to suicide. A different method is suggested in Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?. Albee had originally chosen to call the play Exorcism. Here everyone insulates himself from the world and shrinks into his own world of illusions. The world of reality is replaced with a world of fantasy. Here others cease to be others and are reduced to attitudes of the mind. Of the many forms of self-deception, one is that which initiates the first scene of Tiny Alice. The Lawyer comes to the Cardinal's garden, and watches a cage in which two birds, cardinals, are housed. When the Cardinal, one of the seventy princes of Pope's Council, arrives, he finds the Lawyer talking to the cardinals. He addresses the Lawyer, calling

him Saint Francis, who talked to the birds, telling him that the cardinals "understand each other so much better than they would. . .uh, other birds". The Lawyer retorts, "Indeed. And so much better than they would understand saints?" It means that the language spoken and understood in the cage is different from the language used outside it. Cardinal's palace is such a cage, with its bars made of covetousness and lust. A similar cage is the castle of Miss Alice. A doll's-house model of the castle, as tall as a man, is placed in one of its rooms. It is a perfect copy, in all details, of the original. In the same room of the model there is another tiny model. In that tiny model there is another room like that with yet another tiny model in it, and so on -a Platonic model. It is difficult to say which is the model and which the original. When there was a fire in the chapel in the model, the real chapel was in flames. The illusion is so complete. Similar illusions dominate the other plays. D.H. Lawrence describes such an illusion in Women In Love, in the chapter entitled Carpeting. A dozen or more canaries, singing at the top of their voices, are silenced when their cages are covered with thick cloth. They sit in a corner, inside the cover, "bunched and fluffed up for sleep", as the impression of evening is created. There is hardly any suggestion of mystical experience in these illusions and deceptions which are created by custom and habit, by conditioning. The walls of the prison house are thus raised around the conscious mind. Albee's characters are locked in such prisons. They have become so used to their cages that to them these appear as secure castles. This causes an inversion of values. Loneliness becomes a necessity, even a state of bliss. It is in this state of isolation that the society appears to be a zoo. The presence of others becomes a threat, a disease, an epidemic. In Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?, George complains that all the teachers who went to war from his school have returned alive. Not a single one died, and his chances of promotion have been blocked. Here the advancement of one depends upon the death of the other. Homicide is the prominent feature of this competitive system of life. Thus everyone fortifies himself, abandons the world of reality, and creates his own exclusive world of fantasy. This fantasy is founded on deliberate self-deception, which is reinforced by other deceptions, and the walls keep rising higher and higher. These illusions are sustained by a clever charade, and the world is reduced to a verbal mystery, or a verbal farce. According to Conrad, in Lord Jim:

Words also belong to the sheltering conception of light and order which is our refuge. 18

A good example of this is Ionesco's *Bald Suprano*, where hollowness of set phrases and mechanical speech is exposed. Words, which are the symbols of various aspects of reality, themselves become the reality. And reality is reduced to symbols. The Surreal and the Absurd schools exploit this inversion of values. It is quite another thing that according to T.S. Eliot:

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.<sup>19</sup>

In the world of Albee words are the refuge, and words are the weapons. The existence of the son of George and Martha is confined to the verbal order. Thus symbol becomes existence. Even faith is reducd to a verbal statement, and verbosity becomes the creed. The Lawyer in *Tiny Alice* plays upon the words, "bird of prey" and "bird of pray", satirically exposing the greed and religious exhibitionism of the church. And Alice recites to Julian a poem of D.H. Lawrence that she had read at school. She enjoys it as "Early eroticism; a mental sex-play". Or in *The Lady From Dubuque*, Jo plays upon the name of Sam:

We all like Sam, and that should make it Samsday. Samsday precedeth Doomsday: Samsday, Thurmsday. Isn't that how it goes, Fred?<sup>20</sup>

Then there comes a stage where even the word ceases to exist, and the son of George and Martha is reduced to a mere sound—the knock at the door; as in Strindberg's *The Dance Of Death*, the Captain's son becomes a presence felt in the ringing of the telephone bell. Life is reduced to a game of symbols. As in *Tiny Alice*, covetousness, lust and faith are mixed up and conceived in chaotic symbols. Julian can't stand the uses that men put God to, and the Lawyer retorts:

There is an abstraction, Julian, but it cannot be understood. You cannot worship it.<sup>21</sup>

The demands on art and literature have changed in the present time. The writers have always been attempting to comprehend life in terms of words and symbols. It has been universally accepted that art and literature are the metaphors for life. But now when life has been reduced to word and symbol, the role of the artist has become to "peal the labels". He tears off the masks of words and symbols and tries to reveal the reality. It was for this reason that Albee had proposed *Exorcism* to be the title of his play, but later changed it in favour of a more shocking name. In the play, George says to Martha:

. . .you've taken a new tack, Martha, over the past couple of centuries—or how long it's been I've lived in this house with you. . .but I've reconciled myself to that. . .but you've moved bag and baggage into your own fantasy world now, and you've started playing variations on your own distortions. . .82

And this, according to George, happens when 'people can't abide things as they are'. He elaborates.

When they can't abide the present, they do one of two things... either they turn to a contemplation of the past, as I have done, or they set about to...alter the future. And when you want to change something...you Bang; Bang; Bang; Bang; Bang; 23

For this great iconoclastic change, Albee feels the need of a thorough exoricism. Fantasy evokes false pictures of the

past and creates unreal future. Both have to be exorcised. George's burying the past in history, or in the History department, and Martha's illusive world of the future are both false. George finally comes to a resolution, and will not leave Martha behind. He challenges her: 'I'll have you committed'.23 Fantasy builds castles with the help of words. But words belong to an order, to a specific system. They follow a logic and are subjected to the rules of grammar, and at the same time they are the product of a social process and conform to its norms. Dreams too have a logic of their own. These two orders of logic super-impose on the kaleidoscope of fantasy, creating a nebulous state of consciousness. In Tiny Alice Julian cannot state his innocence in words. As a functionary of the church he must be pious, but as a human being he has emotional and sexual needs as well. In this mental state it is difficult to retain an embarrassing experience in concrete form. This is the kind of the absurd that Albee finds in a state of haziness of perception, in which different states of feeling assume different shapes in the mind, nebulously hanging around, making it almost impossible to conceive experience. It becomes very difficult to keep feelings subservient to external reality. Subjective demands and objective pressures cannot be reconciled. Attempts are made to eliminate this conflict of fact and fiction by creating a world independent of external reality. This may be achieved by following the logic of children's games, where certain rules are agreed upon for the play. If the rules are violated the game comes to an end. A game of this kind is played by George and Martha, through which they create a meaning and a logic in their world of fantasy. Their child is conceived in the mind. It has no real existence. They agree to accept the birth and existence of their son, and keep it alive according to a settled arrangement between them, which includes the condition of not mentioning him to anyone else. This will be their exclusive secret. But Martha reveals the secret, and violates the rules of the game. George declares that the game has ended:

It is perfectly all right for you. . .I mean, you can make your own rules. . .you can go around like a hopped-up Arab, slashing away at everything in sight, scarring up half the world if you want to. But somebody else try it. . .no Sir.! <sup>24</sup>

Martha insists that she can break the rules because she is the daughter of the President of the school, while George is an employee there. She claims that George had accepted this inferior position at the time of marriage:

You Can Stand It! You Married Me For It :25

Martha makes it clear that George has consented to be humiliated by his own free will. In *The Lady From Dubuque* Jo puts the matter in a different form:

In the olden days, in some societies, they would do it together—a hubby and wife, when one or the other was "going"—and in Egypt, now, they used to take the servants, and bury them along with. . .with their masters. 'Course, with the way the help is today. <sup>26</sup>

Rules and regulations are the privilege of those who wield power. The weak and the helpless are made to submit. Albee sees all rules, regulations, customs and traditions as arrangements that make the powerful strong and the weak helpless. They are not meant to insure justice. Their sole purpose is to maintain the status quo. This is also the subject of Strindberg's The Bond. The scene is set in a court of law where a divorce suit is in progress. The husband and the wife seek separation but want no unpleasantness. The court does not accept their voluntary settlement, ruling that "it is for the Judge and not the parties to decide the issue", further observing that "this is not a quarrel but a legal action". When Baron requests the court to dismiss the case so that he may "seek divorce by other means", the reply is: "The case is already before the court and must proceed". In the mean time another case comes before the court. A maidservant has sued her master for having "called her a thief without having substantiated his charge or instituted proceedings". The master's plea that he saw her stealing is unacceptable because

there was no witness to it, and because, according to the girl's counsel, "one charged with slander is debarred from bringing evidence of the truth of his defamation", according to the law. The master did not prosecute the girl for an offence which was so common and for which the girl's career could be jeopardized. The girl's counsel explains to her that if her master had denied the charge she would have been held guilty. He is not himself sure of this rule, as he tries to explain it to the girl:

the question is not whether Alma stole or not; the question is only whether Alexanderson said that she stole; for, mark this, Alexanderson hasn't the right to substantiate his assertion, and we have. Why, the devil only knows.

Law is a code of regulations made for the preservation of a social order. It is a blind mechanism which may crush anyone in its clutches like a Dracula. Strindberg makes the point very clear in the case of a witness whom the Sheriff asks to go home after his evidence has been recorded. The man is interested in the proceedings and wants to stay on. The Sheriff reminds him of one who "went to the court as an onlooker, was drawn into the case as a witness, became a party to it and ended by getting twenty lashes". Strindberg finds law to be a game which is played according to its own rules. The rules of life-truth, justice or commonsensehave no validity here. He who can manipulate these rules manipulates life. Rules and regulations are life reduced to manageable formulae. Society, law and morality are similar games to Albee. Only the powerful can violate the rules of the game, as Martha does, and the game still continues. But in Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? the game ends when George also asserts himself. There is no compromise between the strong and the weak. There is only subjugation. And without compromise there is no game. The powerful can break the law without injuring the law, as Martha is "revirginized". It is for the strong to continue a game, to end it or to change it. That is why it is said that a successful revolution is its own justification.

The first Act of Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? is entitled Fun And Games, the second Walpurgisnacht and the third The Exorcism. Games are played first for fun, and then for compulsion, and are finally abandoned. All human institutions function in the same manner, and when they become unwieldy they can be discarded. There is always room for new games and new rules. The final words of George, "It will be dawn soon. I think the party's over Sunday tomorrow; all day", 27 suggest that a new life is in the offing, a change is promised. The game of life may be a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing, to one who has lost all hope. But to him who still retains some confidence it does mean something, it does have some use.

Though Albee has written many plays before and after it, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is his most comprehensive work. He has studied perhaps all aspects of modern American life here. It has a very large canvas. Albee has attempted to draw a comprehensive picture of life. George is a Professor of History. History is a study of the progress and evolution of man. But George claims to be the murderer of his parents. He also kills his imaginary child. In other words, history has been cut off from the past, and has no future ahead either. There is not even an illusion of the future. The ageing George, having no prospects in career, faced with economic hardships and piqued by a shrew, becomes the symbol of a stagnant civilization and an arrested historical process. All sorts of corruption have seeped into its educational institutions. Then, there is Nick, who belongs to the Biology department. More than the advancement of science he is concerned with his own advancement. He wants to make his career with the help of influential women. He is a typical young American, a symbol of the "American dream", who is proud of his vigour, manliness and beauty and whose interests are boxing and body-building. He is the good looking, good natured, witless young man of The American Dream, who is prepared to do "almost anything for money", and who introduces himself in these words:

I have no talents at all, except what you see. . .my person; my body, my face. In every other way I am incomplete, and I must therefore. . .compensate.

Apart from personal weaknesses, the objectives that science has set for itself are not very flattering either. According to George:

this young man is working on a system whereby chromosomes can be altered. . . All imbalances will be corrected, sifted out. . . We will have a race of men . . . test tube bred. . . incubator born. . .

I suspect we will not have much music, much painting, but we will have a civilization of men, smooth, blond, and right at the middle-weight limit...

There will be a certain...loss of liberty, imagine, as a result of this experiment...but diversity will no longer be the goal. Cultures and races will eventually vanish...the ants will take over the world.<sup>28</sup>

Science is not helping man to create a better life. It is making him inhuman. History is becoming fossilized and scientists are turning into technicians. Morality is reduced to a technique. In this background the drama of the modern world is proceeding with the same sound and fury with which Martha is betraying George and tempting Nick. In the background George is loudly reading a book about the intricacies of global politics:

'And the west encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself, to the swing of events, must eventually. fall.'29

Similarly, Elizabeth, in *The Lady From Dubuque*, protests' "We're too moral to survive." <sup>30</sup> The order of life that governs personal relationships within the home is the same as that which regulates international relations. In both the spheres the individual finds himself so helplessly crushed. The home as well as the civilization is doomed. All memories, dreams and aspirations are summed up in one

comprehensive symbol of death. Elizabeth relates her dream about dving:

There were seagulls in the distance, and there was the sound of the surf-but muted, for it was sunset.

And all at once. . .it became incredibly quiet; the waves stopped; and the gulls hung there in the air .

Such silence. And then it began; the eastern horizon was lighted by an explosion, hundreds of miles away—no sound: and then another, to the west—no sound; And within seconds they were everywhere, always at a great distance—the flash of light, and silence.

We knew what we were watching, and there was no time to be afraid. The silence was. . beautiful as the silent bombs went off. Perhaps we were already dead; perhaps that was why there was no sound. 31

Thus Albee brings us to the edge of the cataclysm. The scare of the bomb, as an American critic saw it, is one of the four major worries of the Americans since World War II, the other three being; (1) preserving constitutional and representative democracy, (2) preserving peace among the nations, and (3) maintaining United States' leadership and influence in the "free world". The Bomb, however, took the precedence:

What is to be done with "The Bomb", as we have come to call the vast complex of possibilities, most of them frightening, which have been opened up by the discovery of the power within the atom?<sup>32</sup>

Albee has treated in his plays practically every issue of the modern times which the west has confronted in the last one hundred years or so. The plays of Albee echo the expectations, apprehensions and protests of all the intellectuals and thinkers in Europe, from Strindberg to Ionesco. The turmoil of the modern world and its anxieties have now started reverberating in the apparently secure and peaceful atmosphere of America. The world has suddenly become so fragile. But some are still trying to provide solid supports

to this house of cards. There are attempts to explain away the cracks so ominously appearing in the system. Tom Driver 33 considers that the popularity of Albee largely depends upon declining moral values, low aesthetics and corruption in taste. He believes that Albee is very inferior to Beckett, Genet and Ionesco as an artist. And his subjects as well as his technique are both very crude. Though Tom Driver, a member of the Union Theological society, does not agree with Albee's depiction of the American scene, it appears so convincing to the majority who are suffering under the present system, where like the characters of Kafka, the accused does not even know the charge against him, and where, as in the plays of Beckett, everything has suddenly come to a halt, as if time has stopped. However, Tom Driver makes a serious observation that Albee's world is a reaction against the bourgeois idealism that paints fairyworld pictures of domestic bliss and ties of blood and affection. But this is not all. Albee is not a conventional satirist who creates humour by opposing reality to ideals. This contradiction is very much there in the American society. It is not a simple question of precept and practice. What Albee exposes is a deliberate system of deceptions. Moral values are vociferously propagated only in order to conceal the exploitations, injustices and lies of everyday life. In a hypocritical society morality becomes a camouflage for deceit and fraud. Moral values are never the ideals. These serve only as masks. And the artist pulls down the masks. This creates not humour but anguish. The peeling of labels does not tickle as does Pope's wit in The Rape of the Lock. There is more indulgence and romantic extravagance in that poem than honest debunking. In Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? the process of peeling labels starts as a result of nausea that pushes Honey into the bathroom,".. on the bathroom floor she took up the mat, and she is lying on the tiles". 34 Nick's description of Honey's sickness is itself very nauseating. This is the anguish of Albee, the anguish

created by the culture that is symbolized in Martha—"lecherous, sexual and ugly"—but this is only an external symptom of the fall. Obviously she is a reflection of social institutions—the same waywardness, the same domineering will, the same egotism and the same destructive tendencies painfully associated with a feeling of abject helplessness. She is also a symbol of the age in its social and moral sterility. But her humanity is still in tact. She is not an institution. She is a human being. Maternal emotion is strong in her. And when this emotion finds no outlet, it bursts out in words and fantasies. In *Tiny Alice* the woman, deeply involved in religious experience, believes that she is the Virgin Mary. She believes to have conceived the Son of God. When Julian consults the doctor he is informed that:

the woman had been examined, that she was suffering from cancer of the womb, that it was advanced, had spread. In a month, she died, <sup>37</sup>

Unhealthy atmosphere has turned Martha too into a cancer. When the life force ceases to be active and cannot create, it turns destructive; just as Ibsen's Hedda Gabbler burns the manuscript of Loevborg so does Martha ridicule the novel of George.

This is the "American dream" which in spite of all scientific and social progress has proved to be a nightmare. The artist visualises the horrible end. He pulls off the masks of convention, law and false assurances and brings out an anguished awareness of reality. He realises that the value system that puts all premium on private property is demeaning man. A bench in the garden becomes the self-respect of Peter in *The Zoo Story* and ultimately costs a human life. Albee observed in an interview that literature progresses after every war. He protests why should man go through wars in order to get to the reality. But he considers the theatre to be a crusade in which the writer and the spectator jointly wage a war against falsehood. Art is not entertainment, and it is not a means to escape. The object of the

theatre, according to him, is not to defend custom and convention. It is to challenge them. Wars make this challenge easy, since they shake the foundations of the established order. <sup>36</sup> Albee's art is the cultural and aesthetic reaction to the Vietnam War. He has been punished for making the challenge. Pulitzer Prize Jury nominated him for the prize, but the Pulitzer prize Advisory Board turned down the recommendation.

Albee has tried to create pure drama, and has kept it unsoiled with the techniques of the Film and the T.V. He has stuck to the three unities. Only in *Tiny Alice* is there some shift in place and time. He has not tolerated any looseness in drama. He sticks to the classical tradition. It is useful discipline for both the writer and the spectator. The writer can bring some order to the chaos of modern life that is his subject, and the spectator is made conscious of the fact that he is watching a play, not a real act in life. This saves Albee from that superficial realism which is projected in films, and which some modern dramatists use to provide cheap wisdom to the spectators.

Like an intelligent writer Albee has used all the popular formulas which go to make a good play. Sex, violence and terror abound in his plays. But he has made a serious use of them. Beside creating anxiety and fear, his plays also invoke an atmosphere very much like that of surrealistic drama. He has also used some mythical characters, such as the imaginary child. The techniques of quiz, fun and games have been cleverly utilized. Lorca brought folk art to the theatre, and Albee enriched his plays with the drawing room games of the modern industrial cosmopolitan society. But his plays are a bit different. They do not have the surrealism of the "displaced" writers like Beckett and Ionesco. In the plays of Albee the fast pace of life that confuses the mind creates a kind of numbness and produces a state of dilirium which obliterates the distinction between sleep and waking as the mental imbalance of Julian in Tiny Alice, but this is a pathological state and is curable. In Albee, the absurd is not the ultimate reality of existence. It is transitory feeling, and has been treated as such, with clear suggestions that normalcy can be restored.

Albee has resorted to melodrama as well, but in order to highlight reality. He has used surrealism too, but as a weapon. He has beautifully harmonized in his art the classical, the romantic and the absurd traits of drama. The synthesis is so perfect that almost a new stage art has been developed. That is why Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? in spite of its unusual length never bores and the interest of the spectator never slackens. The duration of the play is about three and a half hours, and it is so tight in its subject matter as well as technique that for the matinee show in New York an entirely new cast had to be arranged. Still the spectators feel no strain.

Albee makes a clever use of language that ranges from vulgarity to pedantry. Cliche's and worn-out expressions are delivered with an earnestness that sounds very convincing while it tickles at the same time. Like Ionesco he reveals the stupid hollowness of set phrases and cherished mannerisms. Life itself has become a sham, and any attempt at being serious appears so ridiculous that modern dramatists do not need any fools or clowns for entertainment or for wise comments on life. The more serious a modern man tries to be, the more funny he appears. Albee's plays are thus tragedy, comedy, farce and vaudeville all put together, for which he is bracketed with the absurdists by some critics.

Every artist creates a myth of his own. For Albee this myth is the American family. But here it is presented as a negative concept. He depicts broken houses inflicted with rivalries and distrust. They are not fused together by the heat of blood, as in Lorca. Mutual fears and instinct of possession bind them together. But Albee has created a positive myth out of this material. His positive myth is that human relationships can be re-established on new healthy lines. He does not agree with Brecht's theory of alie-

nation. He thinks that the theatre should involve the artist but at the same time allow him sufficient freedom to see the situation objectively. <sup>37</sup> In *The Lady From Dubuque*, the characters are directly involved with the spectators while they at the same time maintain a distance from them. The *Performance Note* prefixed to the published text says:

With some regularity throughout this play the characters address the audience—usually in brief asides, but occasionally at greater length. This is done without self-consciousness, quite openly, and without interrupting the flow of the play. In other words, the characters are aware of the presence of the audience, and since the audience has always been there, the characters are not upset by it, even though there are times they wish it would go away.

It is of utmost importance that the actors make it clear that it is not they, but the characters, who are aware of the presence of the audience.

The planes of illusion and reality are thus made to coincide on the stage.

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II

#### THE PRINCE AND THE LORD

A study of LORD JIM as a critique of HAMLET

#### I CONRAD AND SHAKESPEARE

In A Personal Record Conrad writes of his earliest contact with English Literature: 'My first introduction to English imaginative literature', he notes, 'was "Nicholas. Nickleby", but correcting himself, after a second thought, he continues 'I really believe that I am wrong. That book was not my first introduction to English literature. My first acquaintance was (or were) the "Two Gentlemen of Verona", and that in the very MS of my father's translation". 1 This was not a casual incident, but an experience that left a very deep impression upon his mind. It comes back to him with a vividness of detail, as he writes here, charged with so many associations that it seems to have been a perpetually living experience in his life. It is interesting to study the circumstances connected with this first contact with Shakespeare. The description betrays a strong emotional involvement. He records: 'It was during our exile in Russia, and it may have been less than a year after my mother's death, because I remember myself in the black blouse with a white border of my heavy mourning'. These memories of exile, the tragedy of which was heightened by his mother's death, have played a very significant part in Conrad's career as a novelist. The themes of exile, revolution, sacrifice for the sake of cherished ideals are the subjects of his novels and stories. In Conrad's mind Shakespeare is associated with these early memories of his life. It will be interesting to describe this experience in his own words:

That afternoon instead of going out to play in the large yard which we shared with our landlord, I had lingered in the room in which my father wrote. What emboldened me to clamber in his chair I am sure I don't know, but a couple of hours afterwards he

discovered me kneeling in it with my elbows on the table and my head held in both hands over the MS of loose pages. I was greatly confused, expecting to get into trouble. He stood in the doorway looking at me with some surprise, but the only thing he said after a moment of silence was:

"Read that aloud".

Luckily the page lying before me was not over-blotted with erasures and corrections, and my father's handwriting was otherwise extremely legible. When I got to the end he nodded and I flew out of doors thinking myself lucky to have escaped reproof for that piece of impulsive audacity. I have tried to discover since the reason of this mildness, and I imagine that all unknown to myself I had earned, in my father's mind, the right to some latitude in my relations with his writing table.<sup>3</sup>

The memory comes back to him with his deep interest in the stuty of Shakespeare, so deep that he was hardly conscious of his father watching him. He is pleased with his first successful audacity which brought to him a complimentary indulgence of his father in his literary interest. He never forgot how proud he was of his approvingly correct reading of Shakespeare's play at a very early age: 'I reflect proudly that I must have read that page of "Two Gentlemen of Verona" tolerably well at the age of eight'. Getting such a strong impression at such a formative age and in a very heightened state of sensibility under the unusual, tragic and rather heroic circumstances of life in exile is psychologically significant in a developing genius.

Moreover, Apollo was not an ordinary father. He was a national hero, but more than that, particularly to Conrad, he was a literary figure. He had translated foreign authors into Polish. To young Conrad he was a literary authority. According to the author of *The Mirror of Conrad*: Apollo

was not only a politician; he was also a journalist; a journalist in patriotic action: an active volcano in

both capacities. In common with other animated spirits among the Poles, his patriotic fervour was cultural as well as political and, possessing a great love for English and French authors, he desired to make them better known among his fellow countrymen. With this object in view, he translated into Polish Shakespeare ('The Two Gentlemen of Verona', 'Othello' and 'As You Like It'), Victor Hugo, Fennimore Cooper, Marryat, and the poems of De Vigny and Heins.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, it was Apollo's cherised desire to make Conrad a man of letters, not only because of his own literary taste, but as a mark of respect to the memory of his wife, as he wrote to Karzewski:

never come back, and little Conrad would probably have to grow up without me, fulfil your promise. He is all that remains of her on this earth and I want him to be a worthy witness of her to those hearts that will not forget her. And who, better than you, best and most noble of souls, could clothe him in that immaterial raiment? . . . Her heart and soul were so set up upon this child that I cannot leave him, I cannot separate myself from him, unless I feel certain that he will fulfil her hopes; and to take no steps to that end would be, it seems to me, to be false to my poor wife.

(10th June 1865)

Again on 18th September 1865 he writes to Karzewski thanking him, in a very feeling way:

How can I thank you for all your kindness to my poor little orphan. What you have promised him was our dream in the days of our deepest distress and an encouragement for the ominous future . . . Your promise to send me school books and syllabuses fills me with joy. I await its fulfilment with impatience. Sell my writing table to buy these books . . . 5

Conrad, as he describes himself, later discovered it to be the reason of his father's unexpected mildness to his intruding into his (father's) study.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Conrad's first contact with Shakespeare was one of the most deeply rooted impressions of his life. The practical evidence of it came with his later independent active interest in Shakespeare, as against a chance discovery of his at the age of eight. 'With his first pay he bought a complete Shakespeare in one big volume bound in green, which he read eagerly, supplementing it with John Stuart Mill's "Political Economy". Onrad describes the event in his own words:

The next time I met them ("The Two Gentlemen of Verona") was in a five shilling one-volume edition of dramatic works of William Shakespeare, read in Falmouth, at odd moments of the day, to the noisy accompaniment of caulker's mallets driving oakum into the deck-seams of a ship in dry dock. We had run in, in a sinking condition and with the crew refusing duty after a month of weary battling with the gales of the North Atlantic.<sup>8</sup>

Again the memory is very vivid with the noises and scenes of the sea life so familiar in Conrad's work and which occupy the same important place in his art as revolutions and exiles. He in fact encounters Shakespeare at each significant turn of his life. He is himself very conscious of it and makes no secret of it. Nothing can describe his deep involvement in Shakespeare better than his own words:

Books are an integral part of one's life and my Shakespeare associations are with that first year of our bereavement, the last I spent with my father in exile (he sent me away to Poland to my mother's brother directly he could brace himself up for the separation), and with the year of hard gales, the year in which I came nearest to death at sea, first by water and then by fire. 9

Thus his associations with Shakespeare, according to his own account, are bound up with those highly charged

moments of life which sharpen the sense of actuality and the mystery of existence through encounter with death. In an already sharpened sensibility of an artist like Conrad's, these moments of heightened consciousness work up into a great artistic vision of life, and in the midst of these there always looms, as if inevitably connected with them, the genius of Shakespeare.

#### II LITERARY AFFINITIES

References and allusions to the works of Shakespeare are scattered throughout the novels and stories of Conrad. *Nostromo* has for epigraph the line from Shakespeare: 'So foul a sky clears not without a storm'. <sup>10</sup> This green volume of Shakespeare bought by Conrad, as mentioned by Megroz and Jean-Aubry, itself appears in *Lord Jim*. While seeing Jim off in Stein's brigantine Marlow observes him emptying his valise in which process he sees three books:

two small, in dark covers, and a thick green-and-gold volume — a half-crown complete Shakespeare. "You read this?" I asked. "Yes. Best thing to cheer up a fellow", he said hastily. I was struck by this appreciation, but there was no time for Shakespearean talk. 11

Apart from these, various readers have found marked allusions and parallels to the works of Shakespeare in Conrad; as, for instance, Bernard C. Meyer states in *Joseph Conrad—A Psychological Biography:* 

The setting in which De Barral plots to murder his son-in-law contains various allusions to *Othello* (Chance p. 424)<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Bradbrook also sees a parallel between the two works. She writes in her short book on Joseph Conrad;

the unself-consciousness of Antony is the corollary of his power for sweeping action; his active life leaves him like Othello with a suppressed capacity for passion, and with Othello's inexperience and trustfulness.<sup>13</sup>

She further elaborates her remark in the footnote, With his beard cut to a point, his swarthy sunburnt complexion, thin nose and his lean head there was something African, something Moorish in Captain Antony. 14

Flieshman, in Conrad's Politics, on the other hand, discovers an allusion to King Lear in The Secret Agent:

The death of Velroc brings on the same kind of crescendo of 'nothing' as occurs in 'King Lear': 'Nothing brings them (the dead) back, neither love nor hate. They can do nothing to you. They are as nothing. . .now he was of no account in every aspect. He was of less practical account than the clothing on his body, than his over-coat, than his boots — than that hat lying on the floor. He was nothing. . .that man, who was less than nothing now. ..<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Bradbrook finds more than an allusion to *The Tempest* in Conrad's *The Rover*:

The story is lurid, yet it is kept at a delicate remove from the reader, so that the effect is one of airy heroism, of a melodramatic idyll. The temper is that of Shakespeare's final period; from a point beyond his tragedies, Conrad is playing, not frivolously, but elusively, with his own tragic themes. <sup>16</sup>

She carries on the theme further to almost an identification of the two works:

The rarified clarity of the writing, the play of humour and pity and affection, is truly Shakespearean. In Conrad's 'Tempest' the Ferdinand and Miranda of his rocky coast are enchanted only by the strange powers in the depths of their own minds: and Peyrol, their Prospero, releases them by the force of his simple vitality. <sup>17</sup>

Beside the parallels in particular details, the critics have found general thematic resemblances between the works of Shakespeare and Conrad. Ernest A. Baker, for instance, compares Lord Jim with Hamlet:

'Lord Jim' is Conrad's Hamlet', the tragedy of the

man of imagination who is so morbidly aware of the possible consequences of doing anything at a moment of terrible emergency, that his capacity for decisive action is paralysed, he cannot act at all.<sup>18</sup>

All these instances point to the fact that there is some definite relationship between the works of Conrad and Shakespeare, and that this relationship is not merely a matter of coincidence. That reader after reader hears echoes of Shakespeare in the novels and stories of Conrad cannot be simply explained away as a matter of accident. But, strangely enough, there has not yet been made a serious attempt at a study of Conrad's indebtedness to Shakespeare. Critics like E. A. Baker, and Dr. Bradbrook have noticed Conrad's apparent debt to Hamlet in Lord Jim. This closeness of approach between the two writers, however, may be due partly to a temperamental affinity between them. (Conrad's is a poetic genius, and according to Dr. Bradbrook, he 19 greatly admired the poetry of Shakespeare and keats). The world of adventure, of political strife, of ambition and meaness of the individuals draws the attention of both. The one regular theme of Conrad-that of imperialism, of colonial exploitation and of domination for the sake of material gain under the cover of civilization - very much brings to the mind the Shakespeare of The Tempest. One reason of this affinity may be found in some affinity between the age of Shakespeare and the age of Conrad. The later sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries and the twentieth century appear to have much in common. T.S. Eliot found the Metaphysical Poets closer to his own age than the Augustans or the Romantics, and in the stream of tradition he found the closest link between his own poetry and that of the poets of the seventeenth century. Perhaps there was the same kind of sensibility working in both Shakespeare and Conrad. 20 Or, perhaps, in the wider context of the Jungian concept of racial unconscious Jim and Hamlet, with Orestes, belong to the same archetype - that of the individual, who with his heroic spirit plays the scapegoat to the treacherous forces of life. Orestes offers his own life in order to bring

peace to the house of Agamemnon and relieve it of the ancestral curse. Hamlet proposes to set right the rotten state of Denmark with an assured sense of responsibility of the Prince and the rightful heir to the throne. Jim faces the Court of Enquiry alone while all his companions, including the captain have fled from the scene. Sartre reinterprets the same theme in the context of the modern world by making his Orestes assume the guilt of the whole society and offer his life for the general atonement in *Les Mouches*.

All these factors perhaps play an important part in the artistic development of Conrad. On the one hand, the moderns were rediscovering the Elizabethans for themselves, almost in the same way as the Elizabethans had discovered the Greeks, and were becoming more and more susceptible to their influence (examples of which apart from Eliot and Conrad are those of Ibsen and Strindberg, and later the French and the American dramatists such as Sartre, and O'Neil); on the other hand, the Elizabethans were being freshly interpreted in terms of the modern world. In particular, the interpretations of Hamlet towards the close of the nineteenth century provide a very interesting study of this new trend, and Lord Jim is a very bold and illuminating example of it. Here Conrad recreates artistically the problem of Hamlet in the context of his own experiences of the tensions and complexities of the twentieth century. He is studying Hamlet as a painter looks at another man's painting.

## III HAMLET AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

1

Popularity of the play

Hamlet became the most popular play of Shakespeare as the Nineteenth Century drew towards its close. <sup>21</sup> This interest is evident in the large number of productions of the play during the last quarter of the century. <sup>22</sup>

The play had been gaining in popularity since the Eighteenth century, and had a big success on the stage in England as well as abroad. 'According to C.B. Hogan, the tragedy ranked first in popularity throughout the Eighteenth century, totalling 601 performances. 23 This success continued in the Nineteenth century with an almost uninterrupted staging of Hamlet in this period not only in England but abroad as well. In 1874 it reached an all time record in Henry Irving's Lyceum appearance of an unprecedented 200 performance, followed in 1878 by 108 performances of his own production.<sup>24</sup> Macready, Fechter, and Sarah Bernardt produced the play both in England and France during this period as well as two German and two Italian companies staged Hamlet in England. The Nineteenth century produced some very good Hamlet actors, more prominent among them being Kemble, Edmund and Charles Kean, Macready, Barry Sullivan, the Frenchman Charles Fechter, Henry Irving, Wilson Barret, Beerbohm Tree, Johnston Forbes-Roberstson, Sarah Bernahardt, and Frank R Benson. Macready's production in 1845 marked the mood in which the Nineteenth century received Hamlet: the play ended with 'Rest is silence.'

# 2 Hamlet and the 19th Century Sensibility

The greatest event, however, marking this great revival of interest in *Hamlet* was the very thoroughly argued statement of it in Bradley's lectures on Shakespearean Tragedy. Bradley called Hamlet "the symbol of tragic mystery inherent in human nature". He eleborated this statement in these words:

Wherever this mystery touches us, wherever we are forced to feel the wonder and awe of man's god-like "apprehension" and his "thoughts that wander through eternity", and at the same time are forced to see him powerless (it would appear) from the very divinity of his thought, we remember Hamlet. And this is the reason why, in the great ideal movement which began towards the close of the eighteenth century, this tragedy acquired a position unique among Shakespeare's dramas and shared only by Goethe's Faust. <sup>25</sup>

Conrad felt the impact of this 'ideal movement'. He moved in the Parisian intellectual circles, and was conversant with most of the contemporary French and English literatures. He was himself something of a Hamlet, as, quoting Conrad on his father's death in 1869:

The day of the funeral came in due course. . There was nothing in my aching head but a few words, some such stupid sentences as, "It's done", "It's accomplished" (in Polish it is much shorter), or something of the sort repeating itself endlessly.

E.H. Visaik observes:

The impressions although obscure, inspired in Conrad's mind an 'awful sensation of the inevitable', an 'appalling feeling of the inexorable fate, tangible, palpable'. The complex of ideas - the fanaticism, mental instability, and failure of self-control - connected up with the concept of violence, and this became associated in his mind with the disastrous insurrection of 1863, which his father had organised. It had been disastrous indeed. It had driven his father and mother into exile. One of his uncles had died fighting in it; another uncle had been exiled, like his father, and this to a worse place, Siberia. The aftermath among the Poles was helplessness, listlessness, and abandonment to drunkenness and lechery. Had Conrad already read Hamlet, and been able to put two and two together, in that way, he might well have reflected on that striking illustration of obsession combined with mental instability producing inevitable disaster. 27

We have reason to believe that sensitive artist, a keen observer and critic of life that Conrad was, retained these early impressions in his mind, and when he could 'put two and two together', he actually translated them into his art.

Bradley viewed *Hamlet* from the Romantic point of view, and he incorporated it in that idealistic pattern with all the fascination that it brought to him. He emphasised that the play

most brings home to us at once the sense of the soul's infinity and the sense of the doom which not only circumcribes that infinity but appears to be its off-spring. 28

This Bradleyan voice echoed the mood of the period, and had such a powerful sway over the subsequent critical thinking that, much later G. Wilson Knight pronounced Hamlet 'a living Death in the midst of life.' According to him 'The eternity of death falls as an abyss at either end, and Hamlet crosses the stage of life aureoled in its ghostly luminance'. He elaborates this theme in Shakespearean

Tempest, where he maintains, that

(Hamlet's) sea voyage and pirate adventure, perhaps, may be allowed to hold a corresponding spiritual significance. It is a lonely voyage on the seas of death. But death, in shape of pirates, will not yet have him. He is "to do a good turn" for them of the sea-fight, and Hamlet's account of his altering the sealed orders on ship-board, is vivid and important. All must be related to the death atmosphere of this play. This death theme attains a solemn beauty of its own in the dead march played at the end. In death there is no harmony. So the 'soldier's music' speaks for Hamlet at the last. <sup>29</sup>

But this idealistic movement, the impact of which is still visible in art and criticism, was very much deep-rooted. It had its source in the critical approach of the preceding century which started with Goethe and ran through Hegel and Coleridge to Bradley. It was Goethe who first of all saw Hamlet not as a revenge story or as the spectacle of a political strife, but as a tragedy of the human soul whose infinity is its own doom. According to Goethe 'Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it'. He looked at Hamlet as 'A lovely, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear and must not cast away.'30

It was this mood of the Romantic and the post-Romantic world which centred its attention upon the individual. Denied all the saving graces of a god, a religion, a social code, man was forced to look for the cause of all his shortcomings and failures within his own self, in his own character. The conflict now is not between man and the world outside him. It is now an internal conflict, a personal problem. Hegel gives a very apt description of this situation when he compares *Hamlet* to *Antigone*:

That which, however, in the conception of the Greek dramatists possesses a certain ethical justification — I mean the death of Agamemnon — in the

contrasted case of Shakespeare's play, can only be viewed as an atrocious crime, of which Hamlet's mother is innocent; so that the son is merely concerned in his vengeance to direct his attention to the fratricidal king, and there is nothing in the latter's character that possesses any real claim to his respect. The real collision, therefore, does not turn on the fact that the son, in giving effect to a rightful sense of vengeance, is himself forced to violate morality, but rather on the particular personality, the inner life of Hamlet, whose noble soul is not steeled to this kind of energetic activity, but while full of contempt for the world and life, what between making up his mind and attempting to carry into effect its resolves, is bandied from pillar to post, and finally through his own procrastination and the external course of events meets his own doom, 31

Colerdige extends this idea of inner consciousness beyond the character to its creator. He comments:

Shakespeare's mode of conceiving character out of his own intellectual and moral faculties, by conceiving any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess and then placing himself, thus mutilated and diseased, under given circumstances. This we shall have repeated occasion to restate and enforce. In Hamlet I conceive him to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to outward objects and our meditation on inward thought - a due balance between the real and. the imaginery world. In Hamlet this balance does not exist, his thoughts, images, and fancy (being) far more vivid than his perceptions, 32 and his very perceptions instantly passing thro' the medium of his contemplations, and acquiring as they pass a form and colour not naturally their own. Hence great, enormous, intellectual activity, and a consequent proportionate aversion to real action, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. 33

Bradley picks up the thread from Coleridge, and the thrust of this intellectual approach finds its expression in his writings. Of *Hamlet* he says:

"Oh, that this too solid flesh. . ." Here are a sickness of life, and even a longing for death, so intense that nothing stands between Hamlet and suicide except religious awe. And what has caused them?... It was not his father's death; that doubtless brought deep grief, but mere grief for someone loved and lost does not make a noble spirit loathe the world as a place full of things rank and gross. It was not the vague suspicion that we know Hamlet felt. Still less was it the loss of the crown; for though the subserviency of the electors might well disgust him, there is not a reference to the subject in the soliloguy, nor any sign elsewhere that it greatly occupied his mind. It was the moral shock of the sudden ghostly disclosure of his mother's true nature, falling on him when his heart was aching with love, and his body doubtless was weakened by sorrow. 34

This 'sinking beneath a burden', 'the inner life of Hamlet, whose noble soul is not steeled to this kind of energetic activity', the 'morbid excess', 'a sickness of life are at the core of this Romantic criticism of Hamlet which so strongly appealed to the late nineteenth century that when the final summing up of the argument was brought up by Bradley near the end of this period, his 'lectures' were hailed as the last word on Hamlet criticism.

3

#### SIMILARITIES WITH JIM

The critics of Conrad have found similar symptoms in Jim. Dr. Tanner writes:

Lord Jim is the study of a man whose will is valiant and whose behaviour is craven, who is bravely active in his intentions and disastrously passive in his deeds, whose ideal aspirations are courageous and whose real conduct in crisis is ignoble. He is a man who pursues a glamorous dream at the same time as he flees an ugly fact. In him the best and the basest of human motives are ominously interwoven. In imagination he is a hero; in actuality he is a coward.<sup>35</sup>

This comment, with all its superlatives, can be compared, word for word, with the Romantic criticism of Hamlet. This assessment of the character of Jim is as appropriate, unfair or exaggerated as such criticism of Hamlet from Goethe to Bradley. In spite of occasionally collapsing, Hamlet is as energetic and aggressive a man as Jim. Hamlet counters the diplomacy and treachery of Claudius by his skill and craft; he meets the cunning of Rosencrants and Guildenstern with his own cunning. He enjoys 'the sport to have the engineer Hoist with his own petar'. 36 He bravely accepts the challenge of Laertes, although he has been disturbed by ill-bodings, and finally receives the compliments of bravery and heroism from Fortinbras. In the same way though Jim is incapacitated at moments, he is nevertheless a very efficient and fearless man. Among the crew of Patna, to say the least, he is not the worst of the cowards. In his first employment, after the Patna incident he wins the admiration of his employer, Marlow's old friend. Egstrom,

his second employer, is very much pleased with him. At 'Yucker Brothers' he beats 'the cross-eye Dane', the first lieutenant in the Royal Siamese Navy, for making some scornful remark at Jim's expense, and finally, in *Patusan* his qualities of valour and heroic nobility make him a virtual demi-god. One wonders how such a man can be accused of 'the basest of human motives', and of being 'bravely active in his intentions and disastrously passive in his deads'.

While this comment can be equally applied to Hamlet, just examine this comment of Hegal on Hamlet and it will be seen that this too can be applied, word for word, to Jim;

We have in Hamlet a beautiful and noble soul; one not so much spiritually weak, but one that wanders astray without a strong grasp of life's realities37 moving in an atmosphere of dejection, a sombre and half-articulate melancholy. Gifted with a finely intuitive sense he feels that all is not well with him, that things are not as they should be though he has no external sign, no single ground for suspicion: nevertheless he surmises the atrocious deed that has been perpetrated . . . . he cannot either kill, rage or strike with the directness of a Laertes; he persists in the inactivity of a beautiful, introspective soul, which can neither realise its aim nor make itself at home in the conditions of actual life. He dallies, seeks for more positive clarity buoyed up by the fair integrity of his soul; he can, however, come to no firm decisions, much as he has sought it, and permits himself to follow the course of external events. In this atmosphere of unreality he goes yet further astray in matters that lie directly in his path; he kills the old Polonius instead of the king; 38 he acts in a hurry when he should have been more circumspect, yet persists in his self-absorption, where decided action is essential; until at length, without any action on his part, the fated denouement of the entire drama. including that of his own persistently self-retiring personality, has unravelled itself on the broad highway

of life's external incidents and accidents. 39

Conrad, in fact makes Jim more active and less impulsive than Hamlet. Hamlet does not think and acts rashly; Jim thinks and still acts rashly.

Conrad was conscious of the fact that he was dealing with a very difficult problem, and that there was a likelihood of his being misunderstood, since the problem he was concerned with in this novel was so mysterious and elusive. As it appears from the 'Author's note' to Lord Jim Conrad was very sensitive on this point. He very strongly, even with a clear indication of his feelings being hurt, which he makes no attempt to disguise, defends himself:

A friend of mine returning from Italy had talked with a lady there who did not like the book. I regretted that, of course, but what surprised me was the ground of her dislike. "You know", she said, "It is all so morbid". The pronouncement gave me food for an hour's anxious thought. Finally I arrived at the conclusion that, making due allowances for the subject itself being rather foreign to women's normal sensibilities, the lady could not have been an Italian. I wonder whether she was European at all? In any case no Latin temperament would have perceived anything morbid in the acute consciousness of lost honour. Such a consciousness may be wrong, or it may be right, or it may be condemned as artificial; and, perhaps, my Jim is not a type of wide commonness. But I can safely assure my readers that he is not the product of coldly perverted thinking. He's not a figure of Northern Mists either. One sunny morning in the common-place surroundings of an Eastern roadstead, I saw his form pass by - appealing - significant - under a cloud - perfectly silent. Which is as it should be. It was for me, with all the sympathy of which I was capable, to seek fit words for his meaning. He was 'one of us'. 40

For Conrad Jim is not base, misty or unreal. He draws his sympathy and is 'one of us'. Shakespeare would

have defended Hamlet, perhaps, in the same terms. There is nothing morbid or ignoble about either. Both Hamlet and Jim stand firm and heroically against the external world. But they are unable to face the world that is within them. In this they are rather like Oedipus, who can defy the oracles of Apollo, bravely fight three men, one of them a king, and vanquish them singlehanded, answer the riddle of the Sphinx and rule Thebes. But he cannot fight the evil that is within. Oedipus recounts his heroic deeds to Teiresias:

Must Creon, so long my friend, my most trusted friend, Stalk me by stealth, and study to dispossess me Of the power this city has given me-freely given

Not of my asking—setting this schemer on me. What was your vaunted seercraft ever worth?

And where were you, when the Dog-faced Witch was here?

Had you any word of deliverance then for our people? There was a riddle too deep for common wits:

A seer should have answered it; but answer came there none

From you; bird-lore and god-craft all were silent. Until I came — I, ignorant Oedipus, came And stopped the riddler's mouth. . .

He is a man valiant, capable and full of wit. But Teiresias answers that Oedipus is blind:

You are pleased to mock my blindness. Have you eyes,

And do not see your own damnation?

Eyes, And cannot see what company you keep? Whose son are you?

I tell you, you have sinned -

And do not know it – against your own on earth And in the grave.

A swift and two-edged sword,

Your mother's and your father's curse, shall sweep you

Out of this land.

Those now clear-seeing eyes shall then be darkened, then no place be deaf,

No corner of Cithaeron echoless,

To your loud crying, when you learn the truth.. 41

The tragedy of Oedipus is not that he has sinned. He lived with this sin for a long time, in all honour, respect, family love and royal security. His tragedy is that he became aware of his sin. Hamlet's tragedy began when he became aware of his sin. Jim's tragedy is that he is conscious of his sin — call it guilt, desertion of duty, loss of honour, defeat of ego, or what you will. It is the problem of man, which is more or less faced by all of us. Prof. Knights calls Hamlet a tragedy of consciousness. These are the concluding remarks of An Approach to Hamlet:

What I have tried to do is to suggest that we are likely to see Hamlet more clearly if we see it as one of a series of studies of the mind's engagement with the world, of the intimate and intricate relations of self and world. In each of these plays I have named 'Othello', 'Timon', and others - there is an exploration of the ways in which 'being' and 'knowing' are related, so that failure in being, the corruption of consciousness, results either in a false affirmation, as with Othello, or in an inability to affirm at all, as with Hamlet. In King Lear, where so many lines of Shakespeare's thought converge, Lear only comes to 'see better' through a purgatorial progress of selfknowledge which enables him finally to respond to love. Perhaps we may say that Hamlet's consciousness is not unlike the consciousness of the unregenerate Lear, full of the knowledge of bitter wrong, or evil seemingly inherent in human nature. But Hamlet, unlike Lear - even if, initially, he is less greatly sinning - cannot break out of the closed circle of loathing and self-contempt, so that his nature is 'subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand'. 42 The awareness that he embodies is at best an intermediate stage of the spirit, at worst a blind alley, 43

Conrad's Lord Jim is an attempt to study a similar state of consciousness. It is a critique of Hamlet. To quote Prof. Knights once again:

Hamlet is, I suppose, that play of Shakespeare's about which there is most disagreement. There is no need for me to remind you that of the bewildering variety of different things that have been said both about the Prince of Denmark and his play; it is enough to remark that more has been written about Hamlet than about any other of Shakespeare's plays, and that if, in the twentieth century, Hamlet has yielded to King Lear the distinction of being the play in which the age most finds itself, there is still no lack of widely differing interpretations of the former piece. Indeed I once decided that if ever I should write or talk about Hamlet at any length – a task that I have shirked up to now - I should use as my title 'Through the looking glass', so clear it is that, more than with any other play, critics are in danger of finding reflected what they bring with them to the task of interpretation, so difficult is it, once you are in the play, to be sure of the right direction. And it is not many months since a writer in the 'Listener' remarked that 'every fresh critic who sets out to define the intentions of the author of Hamlet ends up in his own particular dead-end in queer street'.44

It was this 'looking Glass', this 'Mona Lisa' <sup>45</sup> of literature that Conrad set out to study in *Lord Jim*, to which he brought the mind of the creative artist, and (borrowing the words of Marlow in the novel) we may say, 'with the critical enjoyment of a painter, for instance, looking at another man's work', <sup>46</sup> unlike the critics whom T.S. Eliot criticises in his essay on *Hamlet*:

Hamlet the character has had an especial temptation for that most dangerous type of critic: the critic with a mind which is naturally of the creative order, but which through some weakness in creative power exercises itself in criticism instead. These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence of their own artistic realisation. Such a mind had Goethe,

who made of Hamlet a Werther; and such had Coleridge who made of Hamlet a Coleridge; and probably neither of these men in writing about Hamlet remembered that his first business was to study a work of art. The kind of criticism that Goethe and Coleridge produced, in writing of Hamlet, is the most misleading kind possible. For they both possessed unquestionable critical insight, and both make of their critical aberrations the more plausible by the substitution — of their own Hamlet for Shakespeare's — which their creative gift effects.<sup>47</sup>

Conrad tried to recreate the whole situation of Hamlet in terms of his own experience and in terms of the changed conditions of his age. Hamlet may be compared to an abstract painting, a painting in which the painter, instead of thrusting his own concrete, vivid picture of reality on the mind of the observer, only artistically throws a light here and a shade there, giving expression to a general tone, or a mood, leaving the reality to be cast by each observer according to his own peculiar mould. This is what temperamentally suited Conrad as a sailor, as Marlow observed:

A seaman, even if a mere passenger, takes an interest in a ship, and looks at sea life around him with the critical enjoyment of a painter, for instance, looking at another man's work.<sup>48</sup>

'A painter looking at another man's work', this is what Conrad is doing in Lord Jim-he studies Hamlet. He does not simplify or rationalize or try to explain. He recreates. It is a great capability in the artist, and to quote the words of Keats, it is a capability 'of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'. It is what Conrad would perhaps recommend in the words, 'to the destructive element submit'. Submit, that is, to the experience, with all the faculties, rather than mutilate or distort it in order to force it into one's

intellectual apparatus. To apprehend such an experience, the observer, instead of reducing it to his own definition, tries to recreate it for himself. It is this recreative process that Conrad undertakes in his study of *Hamlet* in *Lord Jim*. He was inspired to answer the questions raised by *Hamlet* form the point of view of a creative artist. According to Maynard Mack,

Hamlet's world is pre-eminently in the interrogative mood. It reverberates with questions, anguished, meditative, alarmed. There are questions in this play which, to an extent probably unparalleled in any other, mark the phases, and even the nuances of the action, helping to establish its peculiar baffled tone. There are other questions whose interrogations, innocent at first glance, are subsequently seen to have reached beyond their contexts and to point towards some pervasive inscrutability in Hamlet's world as a whole. 51

These 'questions' are very relevant to Conrad. Dr. Tanner thinks that the second part of the novel contains answers to the questions raised in the first part, <sup>52</sup> but if studied closely, the whole novel will appear to attempt answers to the questions raised by *Hamlet*, and these questions were the product of a particular approach brought by the 19th century to the problems raised by Shakespeare in Hamlet. Conrad, working within the frame work of this sensibility, tried to reinterpret the play as an artist by embodying the theme in the concrete form of a figure of fiction.

### IV . THE SOURCES OF LORD JIM

There is documentary evidence of the fact that at the time when he conceived of *Lord Jim* Conrad was deeply involved in Shakespeare. Writing of the sources of the novel Dr. Tanner states:

In 1880 an old steamer called "Jeddah" carrying about 900 pilgrims from the Dutch Island left Singapore for Jeddah, the port of Mecca. During some bad weather she was abandoned by her officers (except for one who was forced to stay behind) as part of a scheme to collect the insurance on the boat—which they presumed would founder. It did not sink, and it was towed into Aden just when the captain was reporting the ship lost with all hands. Conrad was often in the East at the time and must have heard about the whole episode. Significantly he changed the motive. . . 53

Conrad might have very well heard of this incident, and found in it an exciting situation to be recreated into a novel, as he has always done throughout his literary career. He similarly turned a story that came his way just by chance into *Nostromo*. He mentions:

As a matter of fact in 1875 or '76 when very young, in the West Indies or rather in the Gulf of Mexico, for my contacts with the land were short, few and fleeting, I heard the story of some man who was supposed to have stolen single-handed a whole lighterful of silver, somewhere on the Tierra Firma seaboard during the troubles of a revolution. And I forgot it till twenty-six or seven years afterwards I came upon the very thing in a shabby volume picked up outside a second hand book shop. It was the life

story of an American seaman written by himself with the assistance of a journalist. In the course of his wanderings that American sailor worked for some months onboard a schooner, the master and owner of which was the thief of whom I had heard in my very young days. . . The fellow had actually managed to steal a lighter with silver, and this, it seems, because he was implicitly trusted by his employers. . 54

Here too Conrad significantly changed the motive. He was quite capable of, and interested in, drawing upon his memory for the raw material of his stories. But instead of working up the bare outlines of the stories, he was more interested in studying the psychological implications of certain external facts working upon the individual sensibility:

The yarns of seaman have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. 55

Thus of Youth E.A. Baker notes, 'She was the Judea — Conrad hardly troubled even to change the name of her original, the Palestine.' He further adds in a footnote, 'In the case of the Narcissus he did not change it at all. <sup>56</sup>The Arrow of Gold is almost autobiographical, and so are the other stories mostly drawn from memory:

Youth is a feat of memory, It is a record of experience; but the experience, in its facts, in its inwardness and in its outward colouring, begins and ends in myself. Heart of Darkness is experience, too, but it is experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the perfectly legitimate, I believe, purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers. There it was no longer a matter of sincere colouring. It was

like another art altogether. That sombre theme had to be given a sinister resonance, a tonality of its own, a continued vibration that, I hoped, would hang in the air and dwell on the ear after the last note had been struck. 57

The crucible of his creative mind kept storing experiences till they combined to produce a work of art. Immediately after the *Jeddah* incident, and for quite some time, Conrad had been deeply involved in Shakespeare. He refers to it in *A Personal Record*: after his first early contact with Shakespeare through his father's manuscript of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when he was only eight, the next time he came across Shakespeare was:

In a five shilling one-volume edition of the dramatic works of William Shakespeare read in Falmouth, at odd moments of the day to the noisy accompaniment of caulkers' mallets driving oakum into the deckseams of a ship in dry dock. 58

Jean-Aubry identifies this ship with Judea (the original of which was Palestine). Conrad went on this ship in 1881.<sup>59</sup> Something went wrong with it and:

she had to be put in dry dock. This took from January to September, 1882. Conrad spent part of his time in reading Shakespeare in a cheap complete volume. <sup>60</sup>

Conrad returned to London in June 1883. Lord Jim started publication as a serial for Blackwood's Magazine from October 1889 and continued till November in the next year. The novel was published as a book in 1900. Lord Jim is built on the details of the Judea incident, which have been made artistically profund by involvement in the questions regarding the mystery and meaning of life raised in Conrad's mind by the reading of Shakespeare, particularly of Hamlet.

#### V LORD JIM AND HAMLET

That Lord Jim is so much indebted to Hamlet is evident from the most direct and undisguised references in it to the play, in such overt references to it in Lord Jim as have not been made to any other work of art in any other of his works. The novel, according to Conrad's preface, is about 'the acute consciousness of lost honour'. It is something about a shadowy ideal of conduct, here examined in the case of one man, who, according to the concluding remarks of Marlow is gone 'inscrutable at heart'. Conrad comes to a near statement of the main subject, the central theme of the novel right in the middle of the book, where Marlow is reporting his dialogue with Stein:

He had diagnosed the case for me, and at first I was startled to find how simple it was; and indeed our conference resembled so much a medical consultation — Stein, of learned aspect, sitting in an armchair before his desk: I, anxious, in another, facing him, but a little to one side — that it seemed natural to ask — "What's good for it?" He lifted up a long forefinger. "There is only one remedy. One thing alone can us from being ourselves cure:" The finger came down on the desk with a smart rap. The case which he had made to look so simple before became if possible still simpler—and altogether hopeless. There was a pause. "Yes", said I, "strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live". He approved

with his head, a little sadly as it seemed. "Ja: Ja: In general, adapting the words of your great poet: That is the question..." He went on nodding sympathetically... "How to be: Ach: How to be".62

The reference is obviously to Hamlet's contemplation of suicide in Act III Scene 1, where he is caught between the ills of life and death. Life after death is unknown, but that which is known is difficult to face. Since he cannot choose death, his problem is 'how to live'. I am not suggesting that Stein or Marlow or either of them, is the author's spokesman in the novel. They may have some affinity with Conrad. That is not the question here. What matters is that Marlow is the narrator of the story, and as he states with emphasis:

Even Stein could say no more than that he was romantic. I only know he was one of us. And what business had he to be romantic? I am telling you so much about my own instinctive feelings and bemused reflections because there remains so little to be told of him. He existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you. I've led him before you.<sup>63</sup>

It is only through Marlow that Jim exists for us, and whatever knowledge, whatever impression of him we can get is through Marlow. And Marlow discusses the problem with Stein. He seems to have great confidence in this naturalist, which is evident, in the way he describes him, referring to his learned aspect, and at the same time protesting that 'even Stein could say no more', as if he is sure that if there was anything that could have been said of Jim, Stein must have known it. Also, Stein is the only one who, next to Marlow, provides the main commentary on the situation of Jim. He speaks with feeling, with a sincere concern, and with a profundity of thought that raises his comment far above the personal reactions of Brierly, Chester or Brown. We may then conclude that this is the main theme of the novel as it comes to us through Marlow and Stein, and that it is directly inspired by a study of Hamlet's situation.

Another important reference to the play comes when Marlow and Jim are discussing the problem of Jim.Marlow asks Jim if he really feels himself guilty and dishonoured:

... "You don't think yourself a-a-cur?" And with this — upon my honour: — he looked up at me inquisitively. It was a question: However, he didn't wait for an answer. Before I could recover he went on, with his eyes straight before him, as if reading off something written on the body of the night. "It is all in being ready. I wasn't; not — not then."  $^{64}$ 

This is a reference to Hamlet's part soliloquy and part reply to Horatio, who is trying to persuade him to avoid fight with Laertes:

If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all.<sup>65</sup>

Or again, when talking of Patna incident with Marlow Jim collapses:

You could not conceive a sadder spectacle. Suddenly he lifted his head; he sat up; he slapped his thigh. "Ah: What a chance missed", he blazed out, but the ring of the last 'missed' resembled a cry wrung out by pain. 66

Conrad returns to the reference later, when he reports Marlow involved in a kind of personal, but rather philosophic, discussion with Stein:

"Yes," I said, as though carrying on a discussion, "and amongst other things you dreamed follishly of a certain butterfly; but when one fine morning your dream came in your way you did not let the splendid opportunity escape, Did you? Whereas he..." Stein lifted his hand. "And do you know how many opportunities I let escape; how many dreams I had lost that had come in my way" He shook his head regretfully. "It seems to me that some would have been very fine — if I had made them come true. Do you know how many? Perhaps I myself don't know". "Whether his were fine or not", I said, "he knows of

one which he certainly did not catch." "Everybody knows of one or two like that", said Stein; "and that is the trouble — the great trouble..."67

Still another reference to Hamlet comes where Stein, fascinated by the beautiful butterfly, turns to Marlow:

"Marvellous:", he repeated, looking up at me. "Look: The beauty — but that is nothing — look at the accuracy, the harmony. And so fragile: and so strong: And so exact: This is Nature — the balance of colossal forces. Every star is so — and every blade of grass stands so — and the mightly kosmos in perfect equilibrium produces — this. This wonder; this masterpiece of Nature — the great artist".

"Never heard an entomologist go on like this", I observed, cheerfully. "Masterpiece: And what of man?" "Man is amazing, but he is not a master-piece", he said, keeping his eyes fixed on the glass case, "Perhaps the artist was a little mad, Eh? What do you think? Sometimes it seems to me that man is come where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him; for if not, why should he want all the place? Why should he run about here and there making a great noise about himself, talking about the stars, disturbing the blades of grass? . . . "68"

This misanthropic cynicism not only echoes the speech of Hamlet before Guildenstern and Rosencratz, it is a direct comment on it. The relation cannot be missed. Here is Hamlet:

sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man: How noble in reason: how infinite in faculty: in form, in moving, how express and admirable: in action how like an angel: in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world: the paragon of ani-

mals: And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither...<sup>69</sup>

Bertrand Russell quotes another remark of Conrad, "He want on to say that although man has taken to flying, he does n't fly like an eagle, he flies like a beetle. And you must have noticed how ugly, ridiculous and fatuous is the flight of a beetle." Not only that both Shakespeare and Conrad are involved in a mood of misanthropy and cynicism in their respective works, these feelings are further heightened by a fatalism, a kind of desperate submission to providence, an expression of helplessness before destiny. Marlow recollects his impressions after saying farewell to Jim:

But as to me, left alone with the solitary candle, I remained strangely unenlightened. I was no longer young enough to behold at every turn the magnificence that besets our insignificant footsteps in good and in evil. I smiled to think that, after all, it was yet he, of us two, who had the light. And I felt sad. A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock.<sup>71</sup>

This youthful light, this 'magnificence that besets our insignificant footsteps in good and in evil', and this awareness of a governing destiny immediately call to mind the words Hamlet said to Horatio:

And prais'd be rashness for it, let us know, Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well When our deep plots do pall, and that should teach us There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will. 72

These instances from the two books should be sufficient to demonstrate how Lord Jim stands indebted to Hamlet and that the relationship between the two is much more than that of a mere influence or impression of the one on the other. Not only are both seized with the same problems and looking at them in a similar way, even the language, the very words, used by Conrad, not only echo, but really bring

back to the mind the actual language; the actual words used by Shakespeare. Apart from these references and allusions, too, the inescapable conclusion seems to be that Conrad in fact tried to recreate the entire problem of *Hamlet* in *Lord Jim*. There are so many character, thematic and formal parallels between the novel and the play to support this conclusion.

#### VI CHARACTER PARALLELS

Let us start with the study of parallel characters. Before anything else, before his personal and human problems — his concern with the revenge of his father's murder and the guilt of his mother — even before his problem of doing the right thing at the right moment, Hamlet is first and foremost a prince royal, the rightful owner of the throne who feels his responsibility towards his people. After the Ghost's revelation and his injuction to revenge, Hamlet desparately exclaims:

The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right. 73

Jim too carries in his bones a sense of something exquisite about himself. This is how Conrad describes him:

They called him Tuan Jim: as one might say Lord Jim. Originally he came from a parsonage. Many commanders of fine merchant-ships come from these abodes of piety and peace. Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerr-

ing Providence enables to live in mansions. 74

It is interesting to note here that Hamlet is only an 'heir apparent'. The real power is in the hands of Claudius. It is only the prince himself who imagines to be responsible to the state. Similarly Jim also is a hero of the imagination. Conrad clearly brings out this aspect of his character:

On the lower deck in the babel of two hundred voices he would forget himself, and beforehand live in his mind the sea life of light literature. He saw

himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shelfish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men — always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book. 75

Hamlet finds a similar catharsis in bloody thoughts. Time and again we feel as if he is raving in the heat of action, whereas the words that reach our ears are of a soliloquy, of a soul that is fighting its own battle. Here is just one instance of it:

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O! from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth.
76

His thoughts are bloody; they have been so ever since the first appearance of the ghost. But there is hardly a deliberate, a really willed act of valour, except, surely for his cold-blooded murder plot of Reosencrantz and Guildenstern and his fight with the pirates. This provides another parallel with Jim, who also does deeds of valour in Patusan. Both turn heroes when withdrawn from their real world, and realise some of their ideals in an alien, perhaps an inferior world, of the pirates in one case and the backward people of Patusan in the other, which again, interestingly follows an encounter with the piratical Sherif Ali. Both Hamlet and

Jim, thus, live and dream and act under a father-image, and try to come up to what they would have been hereditarily.<sup>77</sup>

Jim's problem is that his father was possessed of 'certain knowledge' of the unknowable. Jim was concerned with this unknowable. His problem is the loss of that certain knowledge, which made it possible for the nineteenth century to have a complacent attitude to life, which could make it possible to forget that there were any conflicts or mysteries or confusions in life. To seek certain knowledge is Hamlet's problem too. The pivotal point in *Hamlet* is the ghost from the grave. Hamlet's problem is to find out the genuineness of the ghost and the validity of his statement. But it is here the father's ghost, as in Jim it is the father, who is possessed of 'certain knowledge'. The ghost claims:

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word,
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful propentine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and and blood.<sup>78</sup>

The character of the ghost and its associations with Hell are at the centre of the plot of *Hamlet*. In *Lord Jim* also we see them ominously lurking throughout in the background. Marlow describes Jim at the time when he is telling him the story of the *Patna* incident:

He shivered a little, and I beheld him rise slowly as if a steady hand from above had been pulling him out of the chair by his hair. Up, slowly - to his full height, and when his knees had locked stiff the land let him go, and he swayed on his feet. There was a suggestion of awful stillness in his face, in his movements, in his very voice when he said "They shouted" – and involuntarily I pricked up my ears for the ghost of that shout that would be heard directly through the false effect of silence. 80

A little later Marlow reports Jim saying, "There was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well — into an everlasting deep hole. . ." <sup>81</sup> Much later in the story, when Marlow visits Jim in Patusan, there is a description of Jim's house, where

on the third day after the full moon, as seen from the open space in front of Jim's house. . . rose exactly behind these hills, its diffused light at first throwing the two masses into intensely black relief, and then the nearly perfect disc glowing ruddily, appeared gliding upward between the sides of the chasm, till it floated away above the summits, as if escaping from a yawning grave, in gentle triumph. "Wonderful effect", said Jim by my side. "Worth seeing. Is it not?" 82

What appears so wonderful to Jim in the ghostly rise of the moon is elaborated in a subsequent chapter. The interest aroused in Jim is not merely aesthetic. There is something profundly psychological about it. It has the effect of a charm that changes the whole aspect of reality. This is how Marlow sums it up:

He spoke thus to me before his house on that evening I've mentioned – after we had watched the moon float away above the chasm between the hills like an ascending spirit out of a grave; its sheen descended, cold and pale, like the ghost of dead sunlight. There is something haunting in the light of the moon; it has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul, and something of its inconceivable mystery. It is to our sunshine, which – say what you like – is all we have to live by, what the echo is to the sound: misleading and confusing whether the note be mocking or sad. It robs all forms of matter – which after all, is our domain – of their substance and gives a sinister reality to shadows alone. 83

This misleading and confusing ghost which robs all forms of matter of their substance is the type of the ghost of Hamlet that creates doubts in the mind, disturbs the soul and

draws all colour out of life. It is under the shadow of this ghost that life becomes a sterile promontory and man a mere quintessence of dust. This allusion to the ghost is made much more explicit when Marlow gives his observations on the cause of accident to the *Patna* that started the whole trouble. The Court of Inquiry

declared that there was no evidence to show the exact cause of accident. A floating derelict probably. I myself remember that a Norwegian bark bound out with a cargo of pitch-pine had been given up as missing about that time, and it was just the sort of craft that would capsize in a squall and float bottom up for months—a kind of maritime ghoul on the prowl to kill ships in the dark. Such wandering corpses are common enough in the North Atlantic, which is haunted by all the terrors of the sea, — fogs, icebergs, dead ships bent upon mischief, and long sinister gales that fasten upon one like a vampire till all the strength and the spirit and even hope are gone, and one feels like the empty shell of a man. 84

This is the empty shell of a man that Jim feels, and that Hamlet felt, to whom 'all the uses of this world' seemed 'weary, stale, and flat' and to whom the world looked like an 'unweeded garden' growing to seed. Whether the ghost was a real ghost or a mere figment of Hamlet's mind, or whether it was a kind of 'objective correlative' that Shakespeare used in order to project the psychological state of Hamlet, is not much to the point here. What matters is that a certain situation, real or imagined, gives rise to a certain state of mind and feeling in both the cases. It may be presented on the stage as an actual ghost, as in Shakespeare's play, or it may be described with reference to a ghostly derelict by Conrad, the sailor. The close affinity between the situations and the way they have been projected by the two writers is obvious. Even after a confrontation with their respective ghosts - after Hamlet has verified the story of the ghost, and Jim has fully realised that his real trouble was the ghostly jump from the Patna - both Hamlet and Jim pursue a similar course of action. Hamlet keeps avoiding situation after situation ripe for the accomplishment of the job he assigned to himslef. Jim also, time after time, runs from the situation that mentions the *Patna* or brings a direct or indirect reminder of it.

An endeavour to escape from unpleasant memory is as much a concern of Hamlet as of Jim. Hamlet in the soliloquy in Act I. Sc. II (lines 143-147) cries:

Heaven and earth:

Must I remember? Why she would hang on him, As if increase of appetite had grown.

By what it fed on; and yet, within a month,

Let me not think on't...

He consciously, and unconsciously, escapes the remedy — the assurance that he can get by proving himself worthy of his own ideal conception of himself — in attributing his fall to a chance — to human or elemental circumstances. Conrad in a way puts Hamlet in the same category with Jim and his type who according to him are

. . . all equally tinged by a high-minded absurdity of intention which made their futility profound and touching. To fling away your daily bread so as to get your hands free for a grapple with a ghost may be an act of prosaic heroism. 85

The final comment of Marlow establishes the affinity between Jim and Hamlet to almost certainty:

Obviously Jim was not of the winking sort; but what I could never make up my mind about was whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out.<sup>86</sup>

Hamlet appears to be brave and coward at the same time. Some critics find him very noble and some very cunning and in fact evil, e.g., the Spanish critic, de Madariaga. Similarly, Jim is seen to have in him the noblest and the meanest of human motives by Dr. Tanner. There is every possibility of over-emphasising one aspect of their characters at the cost of the other. There is surely an ambivalence in the two characters. Ernest Jones has discussed the Oedipus complex

of Hamlet. 87 Hamlet has an ambivalent attitude to Claudius who is his father's murderer, but also his mother's husband. He must punish him, but without hurting Gertrude. Similarly Jim has an ambivalent attitude to Gentleman Brown. He is a criminal who must be punished, but then Jim also sees an identity between Brown and himself. Consequently, Hamlet in confusion causes the death of Polonius instead of the King, and Jim in his confusion causes the death of Dain Waris in his effort to save Brown.

It is for such confusion that Hamlet cannot make up his mind. The job that he has assigned to himself does not lend to a simple statement. Revenge is not the only concern of Hamlet. That is why, as Traversi puts it, 'the commonplace Elizabethan revenge story, already popularised by Kyd,

does not lend itself naturally to the type of experience which Shakespeare tried to make it express. Revenge implies swift action and the remorseless shedding of blood. It thrives, theatrically speaking, on an undeveloped taste for melodrama; the one thing not easily squared with it is subtle feeling issuing in prolonged inaction'.88

Hamlet is faced simultaneously with political, moral and psychological problems and this complex situation arouses a variety of responses which are not necessarily compatible with one another. Is life worth living? If it is, then how is one to conduct himself in it? What responsibilities and priorities are to determine this conduct? What is the place of personal and emotional relationships in a world hopelessly divided between the demands of state, family and religion? Such are the questions that disturb Hamlet, To sum up, he may be motivated either by a sense of honour, or a consciousness of guilt, or a demand of the ego; or it may be a complex of all of these.<sup>89</sup> Similar is the situation of Jim, who, according to Conrad, as also according to Marlow, is 'one of us'. In other words, his problems may be the problems of all men: these may be racial, professional, religious, social or personal and psychological. Marlow suggests:

... the idea obtrudes itself that he made so much of his disgrace while it is the guilt alone that matters. He was not — if I may say so — clear to me. He was not clear. And there is a suspicion he was not clear to himself either. There were his fine sensibilities, his fine feelings, his fine longings—a sort of sublimated, idealised selfishness. He was — if you allow me to say so—very fine; very fine — and very unfortunate. A little courser nature would have not borne the strain; it would have had to come to terms with itself—with a sigh, a grunt or even a guffaw; a still courser one would have remained invulnerably ignorant and completely uninteresting. 90

This suggests interesting parallels with other characters of the play and the novel. Hamlet is at times trying to behave like a nature coarser than he is, in trying to meet his situation 'with a sigh, a grunt or even a guffaw'. Jim is contrasted with Brierly, who takes a rash and desperate action in committing suicide. His parallel in the play is Laertes who is prepared to 'couple hell' and 'dare damnation'. In the same way 'the invulnerably ignorant and completely uninteresting'. Chester and Robinson of Lord Jim provide a parallel with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of Hamlet. These evil twins of Conrad are built after the model of these two characters of Hamlet, and of Regan and Gonreil of King Lear – the unholy alliance of evil, always appearing together. But Shakespeare's most effective device of bringing the character of Hamlet into relief - particularly this aspect of his character - is the creation of Ophelia. It is the Sophoclean technique of portraying character through contrast -Ismene against Antigone, and Chrysothemis against Electra. 91 Ophelia's troubles end early because she is weak. Her resistance breaks down and she collapses. Hamlet cannot collapse like that. He only wishes his heart to break. But it does not break. He is forced to suffer 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' and to 'take arms against a sea of troubles'. He wishes death, but he cannot die. Similar is Jim's situation, He cannot die either, and envies those around

him, who can succumb to death. He tells Marlow of 'the donkey man' who acted as third engineer, and who was found dead on the deck:

"So they say, . . . Of course I never knew. Weak heart. The man had been complaining of being out of sorts for some time before. Excitement. Over-exertion. Devil only knows. Ha: ha: it was easy to see he did not want to die either. Droll, isn't it? . . .

. . .Why don't you laugh. . .A joke hatched in hell.

Weak heart: . . .I wish sometimes mine had been".92

Hamlet is denied the relief of death. He is made 'to
bear the whips and scorns of time' and 'grunt and sweat
under a weary life'. So is Jim. He would have welcomed a
death-sentence. But it did not come, and Marlow sums up
his plight:

By Jove: For all my foolishness about scaffolds and heads rolling off -I assure you it was infinitely worse than a beheading. A heavy sense of finality brooded over all this, unrelieved by the hope of rest and safety following the fall of the axe. 93

This drudgery of life and the frustration resulting from it blur the personality of Hamlet and baffle the critics in the study of his character. Even Hamlet is not sure of what course of action he should take or in what state of mind he at any time is. This causes him to assume madness as a cover, which further adds to the confusion and poses the very difficult question of whether he is obscure, and therefore confusing, because he is mad, or he has assumed madness because he is confused. Similarly Jim is very confused, and confusing. Marlow is not clear about him. He thinks that even Jim is not clear about himself. Marlow confesses his bafflement:

'At that moment it was difficult to believe in Jim's existence—starting from a country parsonage, blurred by crowds of men as by clouds of dust, silenced by the clashing claims of life and death in a material world...94

William Richardson, a comparatively unknown though interesting critic of Hamlet, remarked as far back as 1774 that the mind of Hamlet, violently agitated and filled with displeasing and painful images loses all sense of felicity. In spite of the ghost's advice 'Taint not thy mind' Hamlet's sensibility is adversely affected and diseased by the wrong he set himself to correct. So is the case with Jim, whose sensibility is diseased by his desire to redeem himself. And when Marlow, perplexed by Jim's situation, consults Stein, the latter finds no difficulty in pronouncing his diagnosis: 'I understand very well, He is romantic'. 96

William Richardson continues his analysis: 'He (Hamlet) even wishes for a change of being', and he attempts it in his 'antic disposition'. Jim also wishes a similar change. He wants to start with a clean slate. He accepts, in spite of his violent reaction to a suggestion to run away, a new situation and a new life in Patusan. He is a different man there — not the same Jim as he was in his world. The idea of a sea-change is also common to the novel and the play. Hamlet is also a changed man after his encounter with the pirates on the sea.

Both Hamlet and Jim are likewise of a melancholic cast." Hamlet's soliloquies project the miserable state of his mind, and Jim was almost crying when he met Marlow during the Enquiry proceedings. Neither reason, nor love, nor even action brings any relief to them. They are both equally tortured for similar reasons. Hamlet is very conscious of his personal honour and the righteousness of his conduct. His dying concern is his reputation. He implores Horatio to desist from suicide, and live after him to vindicate his honour. He asks him to report him and his cause aright to the unsatisfied after his death. Jim too is very unhappy about the Enquiry. He cannot stand this 'infernal publicity.' He feels extremely humiliated before 'all these confounded natives, serangs, lascars, quartermasters' who are giving evidence 'that is enough to burn a man to ashes with shame'. It is not just personal honour that is his concern. As with Hamlet the personal responsibility is made heavier for him by his princely responsibility to the state, so with Jim it is not merely a question of personal honour. He is labouring under 'the white man's burden' and carries it to the depths of Malayan jungles. He sees his situation as a humiliation of the white man before the eyes of the natives. This effect is heightened by Conrad by bringing in the evidence of the Malay helmsman who tells the Court of Enquiry that he dutifully stuck to his job since it never crossed his mind that a white man could desert the ship.<sup>97</sup>

Both Hamlet and Jim have a similar attitude to emotional attachment: Although Hamlet is disappointed in love, this shock does not play an important part in his life. He sees it only as an element in his general catastrophe. His attitude to Ophelia is hardly sympathetic. Love is only of a secondary importance to Hamlet, and so it is to Jim. In either case it is rather an attempt on the part of the lost soul to desperately hold on to something. Ophelia is no more to Hamlet than Jewel is to Jim.

This paradex confuses them too. Hamlet pleads not guilty before Laertes, and attributes his recklessness to madness. His claim that 'I am punished with sore distraction' is no cowardly excuse. It is not a lie. It has been a fact. There is a ring of genuineness in his words:

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away, And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes, Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it. Who does it then? His madness.

Such is the sore distraction that Jim is punished with. He could have offered an excuse to Doramin. Dain Waris was killed because Jim wanted to allow Brown an opportunity which he himself never got — an opportunity of redeeming himself (or, perhaps, of clearing out). But Conrad knew the futility of such an excuse. Was Hamlet believed after all, and taken on his word? Surely not.

#### VII

#### THEMATIC AFFINITIES

The parallel between Hamlet and Lord Jim is not merely confined to the drawing of the two characters. The fundamental assumptions of Conrad in Lord Jim seem to be mostly those of Shakespeare in Hamlet. Both believe in utter isolation of the individual in the processes of his soul. Hamlet is as lonely a figure as Jim. Everyone around him studies him as a case. Nobody knows him. Nobody understands him. He also feels a stranger in the world, in spite of his being 'a native and to the manner born'. What Marlow says of Jim is equally applicable to him:

I don't pretend I understand him. The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog—bits of vivid and vanishing details, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of a country. They fed one's curiosity without satisfying it; they were no good for the purposes of orientation. Upon the whole he was misleading.<sup>99</sup>

Marlow is emphasising over and over again the sense of complete strangeness between him and Jim. He was incommunicable. He was very far from him 'who watched him across three feet of space'. Hamlet is also very much isolated. He also cannot communicate, and his madness is a sign of this breakdown of communication.

Communication may not be possible, but one cannot allow himself to be stifled in isolation and suffocate through repressed emotion. One must open one's heart to someone. Bacon said that a fruit of friendship is good consel; 'but even without that a man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to life, whetteth his wits as against a stone which itself cuts not'. Thus Jim says to Marlow:

I don't want to excuse myself; but I would like to-

explain - I would like somebody to understand - somebody - one person at least : You : Why not you?  $^{102}$ 

The best friends in *Hamlet* and *Lord Jim* are those who make least comment; rather they are cautious and considerate enough to make any comments at all — they are Horatio and Marlow, and they remind of the very significant character of Pylades who utters only one sentence, and that too as the voice of Apollo, in *Choephori* of Aeschylus, and who is a mute in the *Electra* of Sophocles.

They work as whetstones.

In both Hamlet and Lord Jim the conclusion seems to be that the mystery of existence is incomprehensible. T.S. Eliot<sup>103</sup> and D.A. Traversi<sup>104</sup> believe that in Hamlet Shakespeare was struggling with some vague idea, some experience which he himself could not fully comprehend, or perhaps he failed in the 'objective correlative'. Shakespeare, however, has very successfully presented the state of uncertainty. Despite all one's efforts there remains much that is beyond comprehension. It is a state of uncertainties, mysteries and doubts. It is a state of 'to be or not to be'. This is equally the concern of Conrad in this novel. Life is ultimately seen as enigmatic and uncertain by both. The last words of Hamlet, after making all necessary decisions and pronoucements, after discharging the duties he assigned to himself, and further persuading Horatio to live after him and reclaim his reputation, are remarkably poignant, and carry beneath them something of a sense of futility. He breathes his last with the words 'The rest is silence', as if everything has come to a complete end; as if the end of everything is oblivion. This is a situation which Conrad presents more dramatically. with, in a way, less ambiguity - since in a play the interpretation depends on presentation, and will be very much determined by the actor who plays Hamlet, while in the novel the author has the privilege of precisely describing the reactions. This is how Jim quits the stage, after being shot by Doramin:

The white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance. Then with his hand on his lips he fell forward, dead.<sup>105</sup>

He need not say 'the rest is silence', since the novelist can do the job of the commentator which is not available to the dramatist. Finally come the concluding words, 'And that's the end. He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten. unforgiven. ... 106 and this after all the effort Marlow has made to revive his memory, to defend his honour. This is Conrad's comment on Hamlet's request to Horatie to defend his 'wounded name'. Conrad seems to suggest that all is futile, all is meaningless — 'The rest is silence'.

Both Shakespeare and Conrad provide a religious background to the drama of human catastrophe. The ghost from the purgatory can be felt lurking behind the whole action of the play. Conrad has added another dimension to the *Patna* by making it a pilgrimage ship. The *Patna* becomes as much a symbol of the religious spirit as the ghost. The authenticity of the symbol in either case is comparatively irrelevant. What matters is the experience.

Shakespeare expressed an experience in Sonnet XXIX describing the state of a mind that has lost faith in himself and is looking around him towards everyone in envy and in extreme despair. The Sonnet, beginning with 'When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes', perfectly describes the state of Hamlet's loss of confidence. He finds that the heavens and the world are arrayed against him. He cries in desperation, almost loses the sense of reality. The example of the play-actor chastises him, and at another time he wishes to be like Fortinbras. Such is the state of Jim's mind. He wishes that his heart had been weak like the *Patna's* third engineer's, or he could have an opportunity — as Brown had — of clearing out.

Hamlet is as quiet as Jim about comments upon himslef. In either case the authors carefully keep from us the fact whether the reticence of the hero is caused by his own confusion, or by an assurance of the absurdities of such comments, or by a contemptuous disregard of the commentators. It perhaps is a complex of these various reasons.

#### VIII

### FORMAL PARALLELS

Lord Jim is not indebted to Hamlet only in the subject matter and the general treatment and realisation of character and thematic development. Even in the technique, in the way the story and its various details are projected in the book the novel seems as much indebted to the play in spite of the fact that Shakespeare and Conrad are working in two very different media. Conrad attempted in fiction what Shakespeare performed in drama. Both, for instance, utilize the device of 'reflectors' to achieve objectivity in presentation. Almost everyone in the play as well as in the novel is a direct or indirect comment on the central figure. The main character is thus brought into relief. Gertrude, who is a sinner, but perhaps not conscious of it; Claudius, who is a successful schemer: Polonius, a wordly wise man of experience; Ophelia, a wronged but weak person who breaks down under pressure, and thus is spared the torture; Fortinbras, a prince motivated by a singleness of purpose; and Laertes, a rash and unscrupulouszavenger; along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who have no conscience, and the play-actors who imitate the life of action - all of these portray various traits of Hamlet's character. Similarly in Lord Jim we have Brierly, the conscientious captain living in a sense of false security; Jones, Brierly's mate, who has his own reasons for things happening around him; Marlow, the efficient and successful sailor, who is not bothered by an idealised conception of his own self; Stein, the practical romantic; Chester and Robinson, to whom conscience is a word for the cowards; and Brown, who is reconciled to his own evil; along with others project the various aspects of Jim's character. 107 These characters are not merely reflectors or projectors of the traits of the main character. More than that they are

the various aspects, or facets, of the main characters artistically visualized in concrete living forms. They are, in their totality, Jim himself. Brown, Chester, Brierly or Stein, each of them, in his own place, is Jim in the same way in which Iago is the other self of Othello. Iago is not merely a foil who brings the character of Othello into relief by contrast, he is in fact a complementary trait of the character of Othello which is given an independent life by Shakespeare. He is Mr. Hyde of the Dr. Jokyll that is Othello in the same way as Lingard is that of the young Captain in The Secret Sharer of Conrad. Both Shakespeare and Conrad utilize this synthetic technique of presenting character. Each character in Hamlet is Hamlet in the same way as each character in Lord Jim is Jim. This is comparable to the analytical method generally employed, such as the unfolding of character by George Eliote in which a character is first formally introduced and then is gradually developed by being put in various situations and against various characters. The character of Lydgate in Middlemarch, for instance, is projected by being set beside the characters of Casaubon, Ladislaw and Dorethea. The character of Lydgate is developed through comparison and contrast. He is a scholar but not like Casaubon, an adventurer but different from Ladislw, and a philanthropist but falling far short of the missionary passion of Dorothea. Thus, George Eliot takes her character from place to place and situation to situation in order to bring forth an objective assessment of it to the reader. Shakespeare in Hamlet and Conrad in Lord Jim do not parade their respective characters in this way. They instead isolate the components of their personalities, give them independent concrete lives, and then study them with a scientific precision. In order to show how Jim would have behaved if conscience had been the sole concern of his life, Conrad creates the character of Brierly. Similarly an unscrupulous Jim is visualized as Gentleman Brown. Thus, as Brierly is Jim's conscience so is Stein his idealism and Marlow his anxiety. In a similar way Laertes is the impulsiveness of Hamlet, Pyrrhus his passion, and

Ophelia his frailty, and so on. Besides, in both Hamlet and Lord Jim these characters serve also as foils to the main character, and bring it into relief through contrast. Brown is a foil to Jim, and Laertes to Hamlet. Similarly the other characters also, more or less, become foils to the main character.

Shakespeare's most important device is a very effective use of soliloquies. In a way these are different from the soliloquies in his other plays. The soliloquies of Richard III and Iago, for instance, are used to project the mind of a schemer, while those of Macbeth portray a disturbed and afflicted mind. Hamlet's soliloquies serve both these objects, and beside this they work as back-projections as well as suggestions as to the future course of events. They not only inform us of what is happening in his mind at the moment, but also of the antecedents and the possible consequences of these happenings. His soliloquies tell of the sources of his troubles in the past, and of his forebodings for the future. It is through his soliloquies that Shakespeare manages to reflect back and forth in the play. The first soliloquy in Act I Scene 2, beginning with "O that this too too solid flesh would melt" tells what is happening in Hamlet's mind, its cause and the future course of action he is likely to pursue. He is thinking of death, as he has lost interest in life, since he has seen the infidelity, frailty and corruption of his mother, and since his faith is shaken by seeing the inversion of values which makes a Satyr superior to a Hyperion. The unrighteous tears of the incestuous mother not only shake him, but come as a foreboding of evil consequences for 'It is not nor it cannot come to good'. Every single instance of Hamlet's experience is not only related to the past and the future, but actually carries them within itself, and is, in the words of Marlow, 'as full of valuable thoughts as an egg is of meat'. 108 Conrad achieves this comprehensive view of Jim's experience by his oblique narration. Marlow does not tell the story of Jim in a chronological manner. He utilizes the impressionistic method in which experiences are not studied

in time sequence. Rather they have their significance in a psychological order. Instead of being temporally related, they are experientially related in *Lord Jim*. Intensity of impression, not the precedents of actual happening, determines the priorities. This yarn-like simplicity of reporting and reflecting is more dramatic than narrative.

Finally, Shakespeare utilizes the impressionistic method of projecting states of mind in visual images. Shakespeare creates this effect in the Hecuba speech of 'the player'.

. . .as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood, And like a neutral to his will and matter, Did nothing.

But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region; so after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof sterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.

This speech so vividly pictures forth the state of Hamlet's mind, in its inaction yearning for a remorseless vengeance. These lines show his pent-up feelings at a time when he is poised for a strike. But these feelings in his heart are mixed up with another feeling, and of quite a different kind. This is the feeling of abhorrence for revenge. The player's speech continues, now describing Hecuba:

But if the gods themselves did see her then, When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs, The instant burst of clamour that she made — Unless things mortal move them not at all — Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven, And passion in the gods. 109

This not only shows Hamlet's ambivalence to Claudius but also looks on the cruel justice of vengeance from a

humane point of view. (I doubt if there could be any other reason of Shakespeare's inserting this speech at this particular stage in the play). This is a good example of artistically creating an important situation, and dramatically achieving the desired effect. Conrad, in a similar way, impressionistically brings out the complex state of Jim's mind. Jim tries to pick a quarrel outside the court room with Marlow who, he thinks, called him, what he himself was coming to believe, a cur. And when Marlow removed the misunderstanding, 'He contemplated the wretched animal, that moved no more than an effigy: it sat with ears pricked and its sharp muzzle pointed into the doorway, and suddenly snapped at a fly like a piece of mechanism'. 110

In its wretchedness, immobility, suspense and mechanical impulsive action the cur, in spite of Marlow's assurance, no less portrays the situation of Jim.

#### IX

# CONRAD'S DEPARTURE FROM THE SHAKESPEAREN MODEL

I have not tried to suggest that Conrad merely paraphrased Hamlet and imitated Shakespeare's method in Lord Jim. There are differences too, and very significant differences. In Hamlet, for instance, the prince is made responsible for a sin committed independently of himself. Hamlet in the beginning is not even aware of the treacherous murder of his father, and the infidelity of his mother. He only shares the responsibilities coming upon him - the responsibilities which he takes upon himself - the vertical and horizontal responsibilities - those falling upon him as a legacy, coming from heredity, and those which he must share with the society he belongs to. These are summed up in his filial and royal obligations. Jim, on the other hand, makes himself directly responsible for his mistake. He does not want to excuse himself by making external circumstances responsible for his fall. He belongs to a completely disintegrated world where externals have ceased to exist, and the individual has been left completely isolated, confined to his own self. That is why Hamlet who lives in a world that is outside him and separate from him can think in terms of 'to be or not to be'. To Jim 'not to be' does not mean anything. He is his own world, and there is nothing about him which he can get rid of through death.

Both Hamlet and Jim have come to believe in some sort of destiny shaping human ends. Hamlet, somehow, retains to the last moment a belief that he can mould destiny. This state of mind manifests itself in his faith in Horatio's rehabilitating his honour. Jim too initially had some such faith that is why he wanted to get a chance to redeem himself. That is why he wanted to open his heart to someone as if one could avert one's calamities like that, But, unlike Hamlet,

he failed to retain his faith to the last. Without uttering a word he died, with 'his hand over his lips' — perhaps a sign of a realization of futility of all endeavour in the face of some unknown destiny.

Hamlet's last words to Horatio, 'report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied' confirm his belief in a sense of community with his world. But in spite of Marlow's repeated assertions and Conrad's overt emphasis on Jim's being 'one of us', Jim has lost all sense of community. The indication of it is in the symbolic falling from the lap of Doramin of the ring that Stein gave to Jim as a token of friendship and symbol of trust, and which Jim had dropped in Doramin's lap. Marlow reports the episode:

People remarked that the ring which he had dropped on his lap fell and rolled against the foot of the white man, and that poor Jim glanced down at the talisman that had opened for him the door of fame, love and success within the walls of forests fringed with white foam, within the coast that under the western sky looks like the very stronghold of the night. 111

But the security of the night could not save him and the idealist was crushed by the hard reality.

As the sense of trust, honour and fellowship, which Hamlet could always resort to, could not help Jim, similarly love too brought him little consolation. Hamlet could at least relieve his heart by first hurling abuses at Ophelia, and then by showing his passion over her dead body. Jewel made hardly any difference in the life of Jim. Marlow sums up his position in the aptest and most precise words:

The conquest of love, honour, men's confidence — the pride of it, the power of it, are fit materials for a heroic tale; only our minds are struck by the externals of such a success, and to Jim's success there were no externals. 112

The ghost of Jim's troubles lay within him. There was no one outside to struggle with and subdue. That is why he

decided to carry the pistol unloaded when travelling to Patusan. 113

Jim seems to have accepted complete submission to destiny in the end, while Hamlet, like earlier Jim, or like Stein, tries to keep face up before it while at the same time submitting to it. This assertion in submission is the code of Stein.

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do,he drowns nicht wahr? No: I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. So if you ask me—how to be? 114

He is a practical idealist. He keeps on dreaming of butterflies, but is not absolutely lost in his dream. He does not let the opportunity go by when he can catch one of his favourite butterflies. Hamlet, too, in a way is a practical idealist, But Jim in the end is a completely disillusioned man.

Both Shakespeare and Conrad try sea-change as a cure to the infected sensibility. But while Hamlet returns a better man after enjoying 'the sport to have the engineer Hoist with his own petar' 115 and after having become a prisoner of the pirates on the sea, for Jim it has been a 'perfect deluge'. When Marlow suggested, 'If you only live long enough you will want to come back', Jim's remark, that he made 'absently, with his eyes fixed upon the face of a clock on the wall', was, "Come back to what?" 116 He goes to Patusan, as into a grave — not to come back.

X

#### CONCLUSION

It should be clear by now that Conrad had Hamlet all the time before him when working on Lord Jim. One is very much conscious of the play in every line of the novel. But he was not dealing with Shakespeare's problem. It was another's painting which he was critically examining. He is interested in the questions raised by Hamlet. But he is seeking for his own answers to them. The difference between Hamlet and Lord Jim is the difference between the 16th and the 20th centuries. It is a difference of sensibility. Whereas Hamlet is only given to doubt, Jim is a 20th century soul that has lost all interest, all faith in everything around him. The former has faith, but marred with anxiety; the latter has only anxiety - anxiety and nothing else. A part of Hamlet's problem is 'to be, or not to be', because 'not to be' means something definite to him. It is 'To die, to sleep: To sleep: perchance to dream', 'And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest; What is death to Jim? It is not anything definite. It is an illusion, a mere hope, a sense of being relieved 'by the hope of rest and safety following the fall of the axe'. 117 And what happens if one submits to the illusion is the fate that Brierly met. What does he get?

The sight of that watery-eyed eld Jones mopping his bald head with a red cotton handkerchief, the sorrowing yelp of the dog, the squaller of that fly-blown cuddy which was the only shrine of his memory threw a veil of inexpressibly mean pathos over Brierly's remembered figure, the posthumous revenge of fate for that belief in his own splendour which had almost cheated his life of its legitimate terror. Almost: Perhaps wholly. Who can tell what flattering view he had induced himself to take of his own suicide?<sup>118</sup>

Death to Jim is a mean escape, and Marlow had to apologise:

I explained I never meant to say he was running away from men. "From no man – from not a single man on earth". 119

Jim lacks the saving virtue of so many ideals that eased his burden for Hamlet. He is a ship-wrecked soul.

When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; the world that made you, restrained you, taken care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating in an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity or abomination. 120

'Excess of heroism, absurdity or abomination'—this is what has been left to Jim in place of all Hamlet's ideals of faith, honour, community and a sense of concrete, measurable and conquerable reality.

Conrad takes up these ideals one by one and applies them to the case of Jim; analyses them, only to find them illusory in the end. Brierly had an idea. So was Chester a 'strange idealist' who had found a practical use of 'the disaster' — Jim. What becomes of the strong idealist, Stein, who is so confident of his idealism that he tries to impose it on others? The novel closes with a reference to his wretched miserable end. 'He says often that he is "preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave. . ." while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies'. 121 Finally of Jim's idealism:

Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success: For it may very well be that in the short moment of his last proud and unflinching glance, he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side. But we can see him an abscure conquerer of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct. 122

What an idealism: 'Exalted egoism', 'a shadowy ideal of conduct', as against the very definite, secure idealism of Hamlet, which prompts him to request Horatio to remove the misunderstandings of others about him.

'Hamlet is so much concerned with ideas, his own ideas, ideas of others about him. Jim cannot afford them. Marlow is impatient about them: 'Hang ideas: They are tramps, vagabonds, knocking at the backdoor of your mind, each taking a little of your substance, each carrying away some crumb of that belief in a few simple notions you must cling to if you want to live decently and would like to die easy:'123

Hamlet stands as a champion of honour. His personal honour, his mother's honour, his father's honour, the honour of the state, of the people and the cause of justice.

He has no doubt about these ideals. But what is honour to Jim? To Brierly, for instance, it is snobbery. To him questioning the conduct of a white man in the presence of natives, lascars, serangs and quartermasters is dishonourable. To Chester honour is practical material success. Gentleman Brown too has a sense of honour. And Stein, he had seen many places in the Archipelago 'before light (and even electric light) had been carried into them for the sake of better morality and and well the greater profit, too.'124And for Jim, 'what matters is disgrace' or perhaps guilt. 'He made so much of disgrace while it is only guilt that matters', observed Marlow. Or was it after all a shattered dream. a deflated egotism?

Hamlet is a being well integrated with his world. He knows that he is affected by what others say or think or do. He also knows that his own acts will affect the lives of others. He is prince and feels responsible to the state. He cherishes the faith that the state prospers or falls with him. He has a definits sense of community with others. He studies those around him and knows them. He has no doubt about his knowledge of Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, Polonius and Laertes, and others. They are to him real, concrete beings. It is different with Jim. He is

absolutely silent particularly on this aspect of reality. It is Marlow who undertakes all the speaking, and here he is:

How incomprehensible, wavering and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun. It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence; the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand, and there remains only the capricious, unconsolable and elusive spirit that no eye can follow, no hand can grasp. 125

Hamlet syas, 'there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so'. And he is thinking too much. Beside this his interest is in quibbles, in puns and paradoxes, in satirical and ironical outbursts. He believes in the power of words, and uses it, to clear his own thinking as well as to work it on others — on Ophelia, Gertrude, Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He aims at a definite effect and feels to have secured it. But Jim hardly ever argues. Does not speak normally because, as Marlow puts it:

I at least had no illusions: but it was I, too, who a moment ago had been so sure of the power of words, and now was afraid to speak, in the same way one dares not move for fear of losing a slippery hold.

And besides, he says at another place:

the last word is not said — probably shall never be said. Are not our lives too short for the full utterance which through all our stammerings is of course our only and abiding intention? I have given up expecting those last words, whose ring, if they could only be pronounced, would shake both heaven and earth: There is never time to say our last word—the last word of our love, our desire, faith, remorse, submission, revolt. 126

Thus what to Hamlet are thoughts creative of good and bad, (and thus so much irritation when they fail him or prick him), to Marlow they are stammerings — meaningless, futile, imcomprehensible.

What then to Hamlet is triumph in agony, to Jim is futility — or at least an enigma. These are only two degrees of uncertainty. The Renaissance uncertainty is the end-game. It is no more the comfortable Ptolemic world where man sat proudly at the centre, the sole lord of all. It is a very difficult world now, as Bertrand Russell puts it:

The great scandals in the philosophy of science ever since the time of Hume have been causality and induction. We all believe in both, but Hume made it appear that our belief is a blind faith for which no rational ground can be assigned. Dr. Whitehead believes that his philosophy affords an answer to Hume. So did Kant. I find myself unable to accept either answer. 127

To the renaissance mind reality was disturbing, to the 20th century mind it is elusive — 'the simplest impossibility in the world; as, for instance, the exact description of the form of a cloud'. This idea of reality in a state of flux is quite there in the creative works of the last days of renaissance. It is very much there in the poetry of Donne; for example, in *The First Anniversary* where he talks of the 'new philosophy' which 'calls all in doubt'. But then this flux, too, was moving in some definite direction — only unknown to man, but shaping his ends. If this New Philosophy called all in doubt, it soon emerged with new and unshakable certainties. In the 20th century it is an uncertain, almost chaotic activity, and the human soul charged with an idealistic pursuit faces absolute bafflement and is ultimately doomed. The control of the simplest interval.

It is like Beckett's *Endgame* where man is seen moving in circles. There is no linear motion, no progress. In the words of T.S. Eliot, 'the end of all our exploring. Will be to arrive where we started.<sup>131</sup> Conrad pronounces the malaise of the 20th Century right at the beginning of it. *Lord Jim* appeared in 1900.

Conrad was faced with this problem of the lost soul. In Shakespeare he found a similar concern in the creation of

Hamlet. He took it, interpreted it into contemporary terms, and his conclusion seems to be that Hamlet's real problems are not his externals; these only provide a cover for his idealism. In Lord Jim Conrad studies the problem of Hamlet, once the obstacles in his path are removed. Jim is the Hamlet whose capacity for action is not retarded by any doubts about the nature of evil, by lack of decision, by procrastination, by lack of sympathy and practical support from others, or by an unrequited love. He has actually achieved what he thought he had lost - honour, trust, practical capability. Still he is a disillusioned man. In his creative appreciation of Hamlet Conrad comes very close to Bradley's view that man is 'powerless. . . from the very infinity of his soul, and this very infinity of his soul is the source of his doom' 132 Jim is Conrad's Hamlet who lacks the saving virtue of so many cherished and unwavering ideals of the Prince of Denmark. Thus the result - an enigmatic end to a doubtful activity; and Conrad very ironically calls the straggler 133 Lord Jim. Such is the absurd end of a romantic ideal, and Conrad insists that "Jim is one of us"! He, like all modern European idealists, universalises the despair, though, in the last analysis, it is only the failure of idealism, or bourgeois humanism, not of the entire race.

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- 17. ibid. p. 76
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The difference is not a simple difference of degree between poets. It is something which happened to the mind of England between Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as 'odour of a rose'. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work it is constantly amalgamating disparate experiences; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, frag-

mentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinosa, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes. We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult and fantastic, as their predecessors were: no less nor more than Dante, Guido, Cavalcanti, Guinicello, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a disassociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered.

- 21. "... in the 20th century *Hamlet* has yielded to *King*Lear the distinction of being the play in which the age most finds itself".
  - L.C. Knights; Some Shakespearean Themes p. 219
- Conrad might have not had a chance of seeing these 22. productions, as he expresses his dislike of the theatre in a letter to Galsworthy: "Oh, no, I'm not worrying, and I don't want to be in the house. Theatres frighten me and always have. I never see plays; I have not even seen my friend Mr. Galsworthy's fine Lovalties, although, of course, I read him eagerly. My wife likes theatres and has gone to see the first performance of 'The Secret Agent,' as the only representative of the firm. At the last moment I tried to get seats, for my boys, but not a place was to be had in the theatre. I offered even to pay for seats, but they merely laughed at the box office. But (half-turning towards me with a twinkle) you can give evidence of my calmness on a 'first night', can you not? I do not enjoy writing plays. It is an exercise in ingenuity. I found the writing of 'The Secret Agent' very trying; it meant cutting all the flesh off the book. And I realised then, as I had

never done, what a gruesome story I had written, In writing the novel I had veiled the plot to some extent by all those elements which go to make a book. I had to get to the bare bones of the story in making my play".

Megroz: A Talk with Joseph Conrad,

He found that his talent lay in another field. He had read Shakespeare and had been strongly influenced by him. He took to writing fiction since, as he said, here he could veil the plot to some extent by other elements. He made an unsuccessful attempt of adapting The Secret Agent for the stage. But as he explains to Galsworthy in another letter, he could not mould the craft of drama according to his own requirements of taste and execution. Galsworthy quotes from a letter sent to him by the author in answer to one of his own, and, among other things, Conrad said: "I resolved, in short, to write a Conrad play, not straining stage conditions unduly for the sake of originality, but stretching them out to my conception for the sake of that freedom (possibly in wrong directions) by which no art is ever injured."

> Megros: A Talk with Joseph Conrad, p. 28

- 23. The Readers' Encyclopedia of Shakespeare; Edited by Oscar Jones Campbell; p. 289-91 Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, New York.
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and bad that led towards destruction".

- B. Russell,: *Portraits from Memory* p. 83 George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1957
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- 29. Wilson Knight: The Shakespearean Tempest, p. 179
- 30. A.C. Bradely: Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 101
- 31. Paolucci: Hegel on Tragedy, p. 83
- 32. Note T.S. Eliot's analysis of the change of sensibility after the seventeenth century (see foot-note to page 13).
- 33. Coleridge: Shakespearean Criticism, p. 37
- 34. ibid. p. 37
- 35. Tony Tanner: Lord Jim, p. 7
- 36. Hamlet III. iv. 206
- 37. Marlow says:
  Obviously Jim was not of the winking sort; but what I could never make up my mind about was whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out.
- 38. Jim causes the death of Dain Waris instead of Brown...
- 39. Paolucci: Hegel on Tragedy, p. 214
- 40. Joseph Conrad: 'Author's Note' to Lord Jim.
- 41. Sophocles: Oedipus Rex.
- 42. Reminds of Bradley's Off-spring of the soul's infinity.
- 43. L.C. Knights: Some Shakespearean Themes, p. 219. Peregrine, 1966.
- 44. ibid. p. 161
- 45. T.S. Eliot: Hamlet, Collected Essays
- 46. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim. p. 153
- 47. T.S. Eliot: Selected Essays, p. 141
- 48. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 153
- 49. Keats, 'Letters', p. 53
- 50. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, 163
- 51. Maynard Mack. 'The World of Hamlet'. Tragic Themes in Western Literature, p. 33
- 52. Dr. T. Tanner: Lord Jim, p. 16
- 53. Dr. Tanner: Lord Jim, p. 15

54. Nostromo, Author's Note

55. Youth - A Narrative and Two Other Stories; Heart of Darkness, p. 48

56. E.A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, vol. x; p. 29

57. Youth -- & c, Author's Note.

58. Jeseph Conrad: A Personal Record, p. 143

59. Jean-Aubry: The Sea Dreamer

60. ibid. p. 95

61. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim. p. 8

62. ibid. p. 162

63. ibid. p. 171

64. ibid. p. 66

65. Hamlet, Vii 233

66. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 67-68

67. ibid. p. 166

68. ibid. Pp. 158-159

69. Hamlet II ii 317

This echoes, rather rephrases the speech of Macbeth: Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player. That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard so more; it is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Macbeth, V. v. II. 24-28

70. Portraits' from memory

71. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, 142-43

72. Hamlet V ii II - 11

73. ibid. I.v. 188

74. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 10

75. ibid. p. 11

Another hero of imagination is Kurtz. "Sometimes he was contemptibly childish. He desired to have Kings meet him at railway-stations on his return from some ghastly... Nowhere, where he intended to accomplish great things. 'You show them you have in you some-

thing that is really profitable, and there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability, he would say".

Youth — a Narrative and Two other Stories, p. 148

76. Hamlet IV. iv. 53

77. There is an interesting chapter on Conrad's father-image in Bernard C. Meyer's Joseph Conrad — A Psychological Biography.

78. Hamlet I.v. 15

79. Reminds of Banquo's ghost in Macbeth

80. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 87

81. ibid. p. 89

82. ibid. p. 168

83. ibib. p. 187

84. ibid. p. 123

85. ibib. p. 150

86. ibid.

87. Enrest Jones: Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis.

88. D.A. Traversi: An Approach to Shakespeare, p. 81

89. Confused motives mark the character of Kurtz and of the Missionaries in *Nostramo*,

90. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 136

91. Sophocles: Antigone and Electra

92. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 85-86

93. ibid. p. 123

94. ibid. p. 165

95. William Richardson: Essays on Some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters.

96. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 162

97. ibid. p. 79

98. Hamlet V. ii, 248

99. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 62-63

100, ibid, p. 68

101. Bacon: Essays: 'Of Friendship'

102. Joseph Conrad; Lord Jim, p. 66

103. Hamlet, like the Sonnets, is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate or manipu-

late into art.

T.S. Eliot: Collected Essays, p. 144

104. D.A. Traversi: An Approach to Shakespeare

In their various ways the critics of Hamlet agree that its subject is frustration. Hamlet's speculations on actions proceed from a flaw in Shakespeare's personal experience which he was unable to project into a dramatic sequence adequately corresponding to it. This is the key to all the critical questions; a frustration like that of Hamlet, can never make a totally coherent play, because it implies that experience is not mastered, not dominated by the poet's creative activity. Hamlet is a problem play precisely because Shakespeare is still struggling to reduce to order a whole group of disturbing impressions, to give them ordered significance in a balanced work. That is the impression that remains when due weight has been given to the attempts of Professor Dover Wilson and other modern scholars to "clear up" the play. The difficulty of Hamlet is largely due to the fact that the commonplace Elizabethan revenge theme, already popularised by Kyd, does not lend itself naturally into the subtle experience which Shakespeare tries to make it express. Revenge implies swift action and the remorseless shedding of blood. It thrives on an undeveloped taste for melodrama; the one thing not easily acquired with it is subtle feeling issuing in prolonged inaction. The critics, realising this, have often attributed to Hamlet scruples which are not demonstrably present in the play and which were alien to Elizabethan mind. It is much more natural to assume that Shakespeare took over a long-established popular plot and sought to instil in it the obscure personal feelings already at work in Triolus and the Sonnets. But these feelings were not as closely fitted as they might have been to the given plot. As Shakespeare develops into full maturity, we shall find a growing submission of his material to personal needs, but this implies precisely that full control of experience which we do not feel in Hamlet. Hamlet, we have said, turns essentially upon a frustration, upon an experience which is more intense than ordered and coherent, and such experience cannot mould a plot perfectly to its needs. The verse and the construction of Triolus are clearly experimental; they do not, like Macbeth, imply an immediate and natural fusion of theme and emotion in a finished work of art. And Hamlet is a story, chosen at least in part out of external considerations, in which an intensely personal feeling makes itself felt, but this feeling is unable to assume complete control, partly because of its own incomplete development, and partly on account of an imperfectly judicious choice of plot. The character of Hamlet, in short, is not perfectly fitted to his actions.

Even "reason" in Hamlet is dominated by the overwhelming keenness of the senses, even repulsion expresses itself in abnormal sensual intensity. The "frustration" of the play consists in the inability to organise this life, to unite it with "reason" in action. For that unity we have to wait until ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

105. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 312

106. ibid. p. 313

107. Mr. Jones, Brierly's mate, particularly reminds of Polonius, who has his own theory of Brierly's suicide. He believes that Brierly committed suicide in order to give a chance to the old man and create a vacancy for his promotion. He is very much moved by this supposed motive of Brierly. He tells Marlow:

'You would think, Sir, he had jumped overboard only to given an unlucky man a last show to get on 'Lord Jim, p. 52) Although another man is sent to fill the place of Brierly, Jones adheres to his theory as firmly as

Polonius did to his about Hamlet's distraction.

108. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 113

109. Hamlet: II ii 510

110. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 61.

There is one more device that Shakespeare uses to portray the mental state. It is Hamlet's habit of repeating words:

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit: I v. 181; Words, Words, words, II. ii. 196; O fie: hold, hold, my heart I. v. 93; Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me. I v. 224. Polonius also repeats his words:

Marry, well said, very well said. II. i. 6

And then, Sir, does he this, he does, II. i. 49

What was I about to say?

That he is mad, 'tis true; 'tis true,

tis pity, II. ii. 97.

The device is used to depict the vacuity of the mind, impatience, or the anguish of the soul. Thus Lear cries:

Howl, how, howl, howl: V. iii. 259.

Never, never, never, never, never: v. iii. 310.

Conrad utilises this technique quite frequently in Lord Jim:

He wept and blubbered like a child, catching his breathing and sobbing "Oh, dear: Oh, dear". He would be quiet for a while and start again, "Oh, my poor arm: Oh, my poor a-a-arm". (p. 92). And again, "— I jumped. Certainly. I jumped: I told you I jumped". (p. 97)

The French lieutenant of the gunboat also repeats his words: "I don't say: I don't say. The young man in question might have had the best dispositions — the best dispositions". (Lord Jim, p. 114-155)

Conrad in this way conveys the impression of indecision, confusion, reflection or agony, for, according to him, "words also belong to the sheltering conception of light and order which is our refuge". (Lord Jim, p. 236).

111, Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 312

112. ibid. p. 172

113. It is like the world of George and Martha in Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?. where externals hardly matter.

114. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 163

115. Hamlet, III, iv. 206

116. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 180

117. ibid. p. 123

118. ibid. p. 54

119. ibid. p. 62

120 ibid. p. 95

121. ibid. p. 313

122. ibid. p. 313.

123. ibid. p. 38-39

124. ibid. p. 167

125, ibid. p. 138

126, ibid. 171

127. Bertrand Russell: Sceptical Essays 'Is Science Superstitious'. p. 43

128. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 231

129. Donne: The First Anniversary, 1. 205

130. Shakespeare's Prospero believed in progress through learning. He is a symbol of Renaissance optimism. Hamlet too wants to have complete knowledge before he may act. He wants to verify the story of the Ghost. Hamlet represents the anxiety lurking beneath the Renaissance optimism that even knowledge, exploration and conviction may prove meaningless in a world of complex demands. Marlowe's Dr. Fausrus is a more precise statement of this paradoxical nature of knowledge. Medieval Christianity had taught that curiosity was Satanic. Beyond this, Marlowe thought that while curiosity may lead you to Hell, knowledge in itself

brings no consolation. Even if one is spared the Sophoclean tortures of awareness, pursuit of knowledge at its best is no more than a futile activity.

131. T.S. Eliot: 'Little Gidding', Four Quartets, Von Gogh's painting, The Prisoners at Exercise, is a very suggestive and sympathetically rich rendering of this idea.

132. Bardley: Shakespearean Tragedy

133. Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, p. 170

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