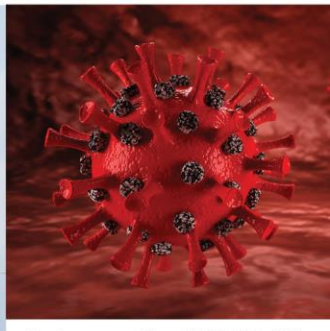
ISSN 2516-869X (Print)
ISSN 2516-8703 (Online)

April 2021

Brolly

Journal of Social Sciences

Vol. 4. No. 1



Notes on the COVID-19 Crisis in India

Andrey Platonov and the Biopolitics of Failed Communism

by

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London Academic Publishing

Brolly

Journal of Social Sciences

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Journal of Social Sciences

Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 2021)

London
Academic Publishing

ISSN 2516-869X (Print)
ISSN 2516-8703 (Online)

First Printing: April 2021

London Academic Publishing Ltd.
27, Old Gloucester Street
WC1N 3AX
London, United Kingdom
Email: contact@lapub.co.uk

www.lapub.co.uk
www.journals.lapub.co.uk

Company Reg. No. 10941794
Registered in England and Wales

Ordering Information:
Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, educators and others. For details, contact the publisher at the above listed address.

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ANDREY PLATONOV AND THE BIOPOLITICS OF FAILED COMMUNISM

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Abstract. In what follows, I will interpret the works of post-revolutionary Russian writer Andrey Platonov through the lenses of critical theory and assume that there is a certain biopolitical element in his literature. Platonov's fictional characters represent the "creaturely dimension" of "bare life" constructed by the Soviet governmental machine. They experience a shattering sense of longing for lost revolutionary ideals and manifest some kind of existential alert to the upcoming total colonization of private, as well as social life. What do the notions of "bare life" and "creaturely life" mean and how are these concepts interrelated? To what extent one can apply them to interpret the works of Andrey Platonov? "Bare life" is the conceptual construction, meaning an extra-juridical dimension of existence, produced by sovereign decision. It represents the zero degrees of life without a legal and political framework, where excluded subjects are, like other creatures, living in a natural environment under the constant sense of ontological insecurity. Platonov's literary experiments are not mimetic reflections of reality. Apart from purely existential themes, his texts are imbued with the nihilistic atmosphere of Soviet social and political order and manifest the real and symbolic structure of power.

Keywords: power, soviet literature, foundation pit, biopolitics, Platonov

I. POOR CREATURES OF THE SOVIET POWER

In a rich and idiosyncratic literary tradition of the totalitarian twentieth century, the Soviet government silenced many authors; among them was Andrey Platonov, whose main texts saw the daylight in Russian only during the period of Perestroika. However, posthumously, his works have been translated and published abroad

and among his first admired reviewers was the Italian film director and intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini. The Russian formalist literary scholar, Viktor Shklovsky, who also invented the concept of *estrangement*, once said in an interview that "Platonov - the great writer, who was remaining unnoticed only because he could not be fitted in the boxes, according to which the literature was laid out"[1] (Булыгин А. К. Гущин А. Г 1997, 5).

The impossibility of classification has a dual meaning. In the first literary congress of proletarian writers, in 1920, Platonov responded to the formal question about which literary school and movement he belonged with the following words: "None, I have my own." (Булыгин А. К. Гущин А. Г 1997, 8). Such a self-confidence and self-description shows only the positive side of the person daring to find his own style and form of writing, not to mention his existential and surrealistic explication of human situatedness in the world. Not only his characters, but also the world and geographical landscape are strange in his novels. However, I think, Platonov did not deliberately make them weird; in contrast, intrinsic style for his writing, abundance of bureaucratic and clerical vocabulary got the reader closer to the world of unprecedented anthropological and linguistic experiment. The radical social and political transformation also implied the reconsideration and, to some extent, the replacement of everyday language. The Soviet anthropogenesis is impossible to be conceived without the sovietisation and subsequent corruption of language. By proposing the duality of classification, I mean the first was the self-assessment of Platonov as unclassifiable; the other one was the official standard, as Shklovsky stated as boxes, where Platonov's works could not be placed. The Soviet secret intelligence, making surveillance over writers and registering them in their archives, made reports on Platonov too. After the publication, in 1931, of his short story "vprok", Stalin supposedly read and commented upon the text, that its author was a "Bastard!" (Сволочь!). After that, Platonov was banned for publication. He wrote three times private letters to Gorky, asking him for rehabilitation, but Gorky did not respond.

There is an archival source from "оГПУ" (Joint State Political Directorate), in which the special agent summed up results of the observance on Platonov:

> His income from literature was relatively good in past, but during the last two and three years, he is not published and does not get any honorarium. Lives poorly. He avoids himself the professional milieu of writers. He maintains fragile and not so friendly relations with a small group of writers. Nevertheless, he is popular among them and is highly esteemed as the master[2] (Шенталинский 1995, 283).

Maria Chehonadskih, investigating the materialistic ontology and epistemology of the concept of "poor life", pays attention to the role of "faceless" conceptual figures of "poor life" in Platonov's writings:

> They are declassed wandering travellers and active life-builders, a faceless multinational assemblage of the poor and revolutionary communists, scientists and comrades of the animals and plants. In other words, Platonov's prose is the proletarian encyclopedia of a really existing multitude of the poor (Chehonadskih 2017, 96-97).

In the Soviet Union, especially during Stalin 'coercive power', "facelessness" was a mark and individualization was a death sentence. That is why it is almost painful to be compassionate to those Platonov's characters, striving towards finding the truth and making sense of their existence. The intensity of nothingness and its all-pervasiveness creates, in his texts, the impression of a post-apocalyptic world. If they are declassified wanderers, their journey does not take place within the geographical system of coordinates, at least in "The Foundation Pit" and even in "Chevengur".

Platonov's characters are lost but, instead of a well-ordered city, they are wandering in a vast, windy desert of not yet established proletarian world. His conceptual characters are extremely poor and live in an uninhabitable world. Their form of life is something in between the natural and cultural. The post-revolutionary violent politics of making a homogenous society through coercive

collectivization resulted in poverty and the existential suspension of one's "being in the world". I would say that, if Platonov's problematic spectrum corresponds, in philosophy, to the existential school of thought, the replacement and new elaboration of some essential linguistic schemes would have been justified. Tora Lane, in her book on Platonov[3], analyzes his texts through the philosophical, especially Heideggerian, conceptual framework. She uses the formative conceptual construction of Heidegger's fundamental ontology - "Being-in-the-world" (*in-der-Welt-Sein*), which is an a priori structure of Dasein. Therefore, Dasein is thrown into a world from which the only way out is death. Instead of speaking in terms of "Being-in-the-world", the inhabitants of Platonov's fictional texts are worldless creatures. They are poor not only in the world but also in their thoughts. Heidegger himself ascribes wordlessness to animals, declaring that they are deprived of the world (*Weltlos*), whereas the human being is always "already within the world" and constitutes it. In "The Foundation Pit", Platonov's characters are experiencing something similar to the "bare life" in which they are turned into the Homo Sacer, who could be killed without punishment. "Bare life" is the zero degrees of existence, when everyone is potentially exposed to extreme violence. If Giorgio Agamben's interpretation of Aristotle's distinction of *bios* as politically qualified life, and *zoe* as life common for animals, plants and humans, which is synonymous with bare life, is correct, humans reduced to that apolitical sphere are like creatures deprived of the chance to live their own life. There is an apparent linguistic similarity between the terms "creature" and "creation". The etymological root of the term "creature" is the Latin "creatura", deriving from "creare", meaning creation, to bring forth something, making something livable. The traditional hierarchy of creatures elevates human beings over other "creaturely" forms of life. Foucault's biopolitical paradigm, in Agamben's interpretation, is transformed into "zoepolitics", where god-like transcendent power through instrumental rationalization of technological apparatus produces and reproduces what Foucault called "docile bodies", that is to say,

creatures reduced to a pure functionality of labour and incapable of resistance. There is not a fundamental difference between "bare life" and "creaturely life". They both represent an ambivalent system of the political sphere when sovereign power incorporates them within its own field of control through their exclusion. This is the kernel of biopolitical passive inclusion of a citizen into the political discourse, when they are excluded and, by this very exclusion, inadvertently linked to the sovereign power. Becoming a subject is an infinite process of creation, but discursive practices and epistemic configurations within a certain paradigm of power constitute the form of subjectivity. That is to say, through the social and political systems of normalization, one has been blended into the faceless body of "creaturely" assemblage. Julia R Lupton, to whom Eric Santner also refers to, wrote precisely about the continuation of a creation:

Creatura is a thing always in the process of undergoing creation; the creature is actively passive or, better, passionate, perpetually becoming created, subject to transformation at the behest of the arbitrary commands of an Other (Lupton 2000, 1).

The psychoanalytical-theological concept of an Other has assumed the political sense, especially in the strange interconnection of Schmitt's Christian political theology with Foucault's biopolitical paradigm. In both cases, power is intangible and transcendent; it is an absolute Otherness producing creatures in the world. A politically translated system of interdependences between Creator (sovereign), Creation (power) and Creature (people) demonstrates that not only the creature needs to maintain a relationship with the creator, but the creator himself does not stop the process of creation. The great German-Jewish philosopher, Franz Rosenzweig in his magnum opus "The Stat of Redemption" insists on the eternal work of the creator. God's economy, that is to say, his praxis is continuing even after the genuine act of creation:

> In this consciousness of being a creature (*Kreaturbewußtsein*), that is in the consciousness of not having been created one day in the past, but of

> constantly being in the circumstance of creature, this consciousness is something absolutely objective (…). The world's consciousness of being a creature (*Das Kreaturbewußtsein der Welt*) that is, its consciousness of being constantly created, and not of having been created, is objectified in the idea of divine Providence (Rosenzweig 2004, 131).

Here, Rosenzweig assumes the world as a creature in a constant process of creation. The theological-political nexus developed by Carl Schmitt places the sovereign above the constitutional order, giving him a weapon in form of the decision over the production of the state of exception. Benjamin's baroque sovereign is unable to decide on the state of exception. He is like Melville's Bartleby, living in a constant mode of undecidability, responding to questions with the endlessly repeating formula "I would prefer not to". This oscillation between alternatives is the intrinsic seal of the baroque sovereign. Lupton, commenting upon Benjamin's materialistic analysis of political theology, underscores that Benjamin's theory of sovereignty fundamentally differs from Schmitt's one because he is not like a God and remains within the realm of creatures[4]. Lupton quotes the following passage from Benjamin's "Trauerspiel":

> "However highly he is enthroned over subject and state, his status is confined to the world of creation; he is the lord of creatures, but he remains a creature" (Lupton 2000, 6).

Now, let me return to Platonov's "creaturely" representation of poor proletarian subjects, whose lord is a materialistic figuration of the religious image of divinity but, unlike God, he is also a creature. The sovereign demiurge of poor life, in Platonov's "The Foundation Pit", is invisible. The power realizes itself through the omnipresent vocal mediation of Radio. Through dictating and calling voices, power fulfils the soteriological expectations of creatures excavating the pit for future houses for the proletariat: "What do you say, Comrades," Safronov suggested one evening, "how about installing a radio to listen to achievements and directives?" (Platonov 1975, 50). Radio, as a modern technological device and communicational

apparatus, plays a symbolic role in this novel. The voice heard from the radio is not caring, but demanding. The promise of an ideal heavenly world is a solace for Platonov's new proletarian creatures. They need a sign to follow the external guidance, without which they are unable to organize the working plan. Prushevsky managed to fix the radio quickly, but now there was no music, only a man's voice: "Listen to our announcements: collect willow bark!" (Platonov 1975, 115). The Soviet power is not seen but heard. The technological mediation of voice through radio constitutes an illusion of presence, as if those above, from the party, are near, although they remain infinitely remote from the assemblage of the poor. Radio keeps the power at distance, despite that voice reaches the target. Nevertheless, the diggers of "impossible infrastructure"[5] of future proletarian happiness want to see and touch it. Their unfulfilled desire is the materialization of the voice. "From the radio and other cultural material, we hear the party line, but nothing we can touch" (Platonov 1975, 63). The speaking subject from the radio remains hidden and undisclosed. The voice is a transparent signifier of power and represents its bodiless sacredness. Holiness is no longer ascribed to the relics of the saints but it has been transformed into the vocal spectre. The voice coming from the radio eliminates physical distance and represents an imperative ontology of intangible power. Untouchability of power and its revolutionary deeds constitute the structure of secularized sacrality. However, here again, the phenomenology of touch is one-sided and is accessible to the subject producing the voice. Platonov's workers are not able to touch the glory of the Soviet power, they are passive subjects deprived of it. The only compelling timbre of the voice despite its nonmaterial, spectral presence can touch even their hearts. Jacque Derrida's question refers precisely to this phenomenon of "being touched by the voice":

> Who would deny that we can touch with our voice-close or far away, naturally or technically, if we could still rely on this distinction, in the open air or on the phone-and thus, even touch to the heart? (Derrida 2005, 204).

The voice heard from a telephone and that coming from radio constitute different modes of subjectivity. There is a certain level of autonomy when one speaks on the telephone; it "liberally permitted the participant to play the role of subject" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 95). Pivotal word here is a play, which connotes to the pure performativity of a speaker constituting his or her subjectivity through the vocal performance. During the communication via telephone, one retains at least a minimal level of subjectivity by having the possibility of response, while radio "makes everyone equally into listeners, in order to expose them in authoritarian fashion to the same programs put out by different stations" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 95). Platonov's characters are precisely such passive recipients of the imperative from the radio. Despite the absent presence of the operative voice, listeners are still waiting for the new plan. However, this waiting may also be tiresome, and even the most dedicated servant of the new social ideal can explode out of the rage inflicted by this intangibility and obscurity of power. Platonov's diggers of the pit are reduced to the functionality of labour, whose only right is to use their bodies, as it is in Aristotle's characterization of the slave. However, some of them, unconsciously still strive towards recognition, which is one of the fundamental desire of a human being. The telephone implies such a kind of recognition, while radio aiming at the proliferation of ideology does not recognize the individual, rather faceless masses. Platonov's characters also want to participate in power and respond to the speaker of the radio, they are like "unhappy consciousness," trying in vain to grasp the unreachable voice:

> Safronov listened with a sense of triumph, regretting only that he could not talk back into the speaker, to make known his readiness for all activity, for clipping horses, and his general happiness. But Zhachev, and Voshchev, too, began to feel unreasonably ashamed as they heard the long speeches over the radio. They had nothing against the speakers and admonishers, but they felt more and more acutely their personal disgrace. Sometimes Zhachev could no longer endure the oppressive despair of his soul, and he shouted amid the

> noise of social consciousness pouring from the loudspeaker: "Stop that sound! Let me answer it! (Platonov 1975, 56).

Safronov is the most enthusiastic technical worker, believing in his special role in the process of organization of the masses and constantly being unsatisfied by the tempo of the work. His self-donation to the party and readiness for general happiness is unconditional; the cause of his melancholy is the one-sided imposition of commands from the radio. He is happy and feels glorious for that, but regrets that he is not able to respond to the speaker. Zachev, who is a cripple, feels the despair and shame for listening to the voice as a "social consciousness," and he wants to have a dialogue with it, probably to explain something, because he acutely feels the personal disgrace. This is a one-way street, where there are only pitfalls for thought. Both Safronov and Zachev, despite their molecular importance, desire recognition by the radio. If a voice can touch, as Derrida suggested, even without touching the tactile surface of the body, Platonov's creatures also want to respond to the touching voice: they also need reciprocity and recognition because, as Aristotle wrote, "without touch, it is impossible for an animal to exist" (Aristotle, *De Anima* 434b, 12–20).

II. "CREATURELY" MADNESS

The ontological incompleteness and transcendentally framed lack of truth are already traceable in Platonov's "Foundation Pit, which starts and continuous along with an existential crisis of Voshchev, who comes from nowhere and wanders in the void thinking about the truth. At the outset of the novel, Platonov masterfully introduces the dichotomy of private and public life.

> On the day when he reached the thirtieth year of his personal life, Voshchev was discharged from the small machine factory (Platonov 1975, 3) (…) due to

> the rise of powerlessness and tendency to stop and think amidst the general flow of work (Platonov 1975, 3).

Voshchev is absolutely atopos in the world. "I'd better leave you all and go begging at the collective farms. I am ashamed to live without the truth anyway" (Platonov 1975, 40). He became a nomadic subject, excluded from commonality and thrown into the unknown and unexplored world. It seems that the general tempo of labour rules out even the minute for thoughtfulness. Here, there is an insurmountable gap between the active and the contemplative way of life. An essence of new social reality requires constant movement and places the physicality of the labourer creature over reflective subjectivity. The category of labour as aim implies the orientation towards the time to come, where mediation of aim will be sublated and the kingdom will be established. As Joseph Brodsky wrote commenting upon Platonov's "Foundation Pit":

> The idea of paradise is the logical end of human thought in the sense that it, that thought, goes no further; for beyond paradise there is nothing else, nothing else happens. It can safely be said, therefore, that paradise is a dead end; it's the last vision of space, the end of things, the summit of the mountain, the peak from which there is nowhere to step – except into pure Chronos; hence the introduction of the concept of eternal life. The same actually applies to hell; structurally at least, these two things have a lot in common (Brodsky 1987, 268-304).

Paradise is a deadlock for thought, there is nothing beyond it. After being arrived in heaven and achieving the fullness and excess of work, one would have been trapped in hell. That is to say, soteriological hope would coincide with eschatological despair. The failed desire and unrealized project of building the house of the future proletariat make Platonovs' characters suffer:

> I'm afraid of the perplexity of heart, Comrade Chiklin. I don't know, myself, what it is. It seems to me all the time that there is something special in the distance or some splendid unattainable object, and I live in sadness (Platonov 1975, 83).

Voshchev's immersion in sadness is due to his awareness of the vanity of digging the pit and the impossibility to realize the socialist utopia. The unattainability of the desired object destructs his hope for happiness and makes him a lonely creature whose only function is to collect useless objects and keeping memory about them, like in the case of the fallen leaf: "Since nobody needs you and you are lying uselessly in the middle of things, I will keep and remember you" (Platonov 1975, 8).

Voshchev is not fitted for an active way of labour life, he is reluctant to support the general tempo of the labour. He lived entirely in privacy and preferred clandestine life to the "public" form of new Soviet existence. Robert Hodel, in one of his articles, analyzing the narrative structure of the introductions of Platonov's "Foundation Pit," Kafka's "Der Prozess" and Robert Walser's "Der Gehülfe," suggests that the "striving towards the being part of a "public life" is the main intention of Voschev" (Ходель 2008, 48-60). However, Voshchev seems to be part of the workers only by inertia, without ascribing positive significance to the desire of creating a new communal form of organization. His inward reflective subjectivity consists of asking fundamental existential questions about the sense and purpose of life. After being hired, he started to wander and think about his place in the world and the question constantly bothering him is about his usefulness and purposefulness for the world. Platonov's intervention makes clear that Voshchev has to accept the new world as it is, and has to forgive his grief. However, grief for what? The Russian word for grief used by Platonov is "горя", which can also be translated as melancholy:

> But sleep requires peace of mind, faith in life, forgiveness for suffering endured (прощение прожитого горя), and Voshchev lay in arid tension of wakefulness and did not know - was he of any use in the world, or could everything go on just as well without him (Platonov 1975, 5).

Jonathan Flatley, by elaborating on the concept of "melancholy" insists that, for Walter Benjamin, melancholy was not a problematic mental condition of an individual; instead, Benjamin underlined its

historicity, associating melancholy with side effects of modernity. Flatley wrote: "In this view, melancholia is no longer a personal problem requiring cure or catharsis, but is evidence of the historicity of one's subjectivity, indeed the very substance of that historicity" (Flatley 2008, 3). Voshchev does not experience the desire to construct the communal form of life. Of course, he was thinking about it, but it is not his business. As he was told, "the factory works according to the plan laid down by the Trust" (Platonov 1975, 5). The individual thinking subject cannot contribute to the general functioning of social industries. In this new, post-revolutionary reality, thinking is a pejorative and Voshchev, who was "standing and thinking in the middle of production," is a marginal subject, finding himself in the state of anomie, when the old is dead and the new is not yet coming. He occupies the no man's land, in between his own previous private life and obscure, quasi-public life of proletarians. Voshchev thinks that the value and tangible positive result of reflection are that, he would "thought up something like happiness" (Platonov 1975, 5). However, crucial here is the expression, "something like". Voshchev is unable, in fact, to figure out what exactly happiness is. He only can imagine his own version of happiness, which would not necessarily coincide with the conception given by the party:

> Happiness will come from materialism, Comrade Voshchev, and not from meaning. We cannot defend (отстоять) you, you are a politically ignorant man (ты человек несознательный), and we don't wish to find ourselves at the tail end of the masses (Platonov 1975, 5).

The incompatibility of materialism with Voshchev's reflective subjectivity is evident in his attitude towards the promised happiness coming out from materialism. "Happiness is a far-off business anyway (…). Happiness will only lead to shame"! (Platonov 1975, 23). Voshchev's dissatisfaction and disappointment in workers mechanically digging the pit and trying to organize the masses is supported by his desire to get detached from them. This obsessive desire to build up the house for future proletarians destroys them.

The unconstructed tower of babel, which has to summon and give shelter to orphan proletarian subjects remain a dream and symbolically reveals the groundlessness of communist utopia.

An orphan girl, Nastya, is a symbolic representation of comrade's hope in a bright socialist future. Platonov draws a picture of extreme poverty, hopelessness and abysmal negativity of existential condition of abandonment and loneliness. Nastya and her mother embody the "creaturely" exclusion under the new post-revolutionary reality. Perplexing is not the death itself, but the process of dying, even in the last instances of breath; the mother worries about the future of her daughter among inimical proletarians and alerts her not to reveal her identity and the roots of the social class. The cause of death could have been belonging to the class of bourgeoisie as well as death itself. "Why are you dying, mama - because you're a bourgeois, or from death?" (Platonov 1975, 54). Platonov showed the unbearable sadness of being alive in violent post-revolutionary times when not only forced collectivization and confiscation of property were justified but also the murder of the so-called class enemy. In this framework, killing is encouraged for the sake of future happiness, but happiness projected onto the hope of the construction of the future proletarian house, could not be achieved due to its bloody and violent foundation which, instead of being the solid ground for socialistic infrastructure, manifests an abysmal emptiness and becomes the necropolis of diggers. Nastya should have to keep the secret and live with a tragic consciousness of loss and remembering. As if her mother did not exist at all and she comes from nowhere: "After you die, I'll never tell anybody, and nobody will know if you ever were or weren't. Only I'll go on living and remembering you in my head" (Platonov 1975, 54). Nastya is reduced to "bare life" and has to adjust herself to the new reality. Her mother was declassified subject and belonged to the class, extermination of which will be demanded by her daughter later on in the novel. Nastya introduced herself to Chiklin and his co-workers as nobody, as if Platonov makes out of her the new Odysseus using his cunning reason to escape from the

cave of the Cyclops. "I'm nobody… I didn't want to get born—I was afraid my mother would be a bourgeois" (Platonov 1975, 61-62). She goes even further and tries to enchant proletarians by claiming that she did not want to be born during the bourgeoisie, only after Lenin appeared, she decided to come to being. Platonov's irony towards the primordial image of Lenin can be seen in the following words of the most enthusiastic proletarian, Safronov: "And how deep our Soviet government is if even children without memory of their mothers already sense Comrade Lenin!" (Platonov 1975, 61-62).

Lenin is a symbolic displacement of the lost mother, who gives shelter to orphaned masses. However, the tragedy of the new life builders is the impossibility of being a caregiver. Despite their attempts, they could not provide elementary living conditions for Nastya, who embodies for them "the substance of creation and the goal of the party" to survive illness, and thus "become the universal element" (Platonov 1975, 63). Dreams about a happy community in socialism symbolically represented in the figure of the orphan girl Nastya is finally ruined by her death. Instead of constructing the house based on the pit, it becomes the grave for the symbol of socialism. Moreover, peasants want to find salvation in an abysmal foundation pit and they worked all day long to dig it out. A symptomatic and diagnostic representation of sadness is the cripple Zhachev, who did not participate in labour and claiming that he does "believe in nothing now" (Platonov 1975, 141).

In the middle of the novel, Platonov describes the horrific and violent process of forced collectivization in the nameless village where peasants tried to resist expropriation of their property by slaughtering their cattle and eating the meat because "it was necessary to hide the flesh of the butchered family beasts inside one's body and save it, therefore, from socialization" (Platonov 1975, 100-101). The scene of exclusion of the class enemy demonstrates the extreme negativity of "bare life", where communists tried to build up a homogeneous classless society by extermination or exclusion of others. One of the most dreadful

passages in the novel is when communists put the peasants on the raft and send them downstream to the sea. After liquidating the class enemy, Zachev was looking at them for a while, as if anticipating his own destiny, "because socialism didn't need the stratum of sad cripples, and he, too, would soon be liquidated into the distant silence" (Platonov 1975, 112-113). In the Soviet Union, perpetrators often became victims, but conversely, victims never became perpetrators. Platonov makes the plot even more stranger by introducing the bear, which helps the communists to find out the class of kulaks. One of them, after being detected, pretended to be dead. He "lay in an empty coffin and, at every sound, he shut his eyes as if dead" (Platonov 1975, 89). This moment reveals the fundamental existential perplexity of a person oscillating between life and death.

Voshchev embodies the figure of "undeadness" which, as Eric Santner assumes, is "the space between real and symbolic death" and is an "ultimate domain of creaturely life" (Santner 2006, preface). Voshchev is in between the real and symbolic register of death, as a vampire who is cursed to live eternally. Platonov ironically reverses Descartes's proof of existence, "I think, therefore I am," by stating, via Voshchev: "I don't exist here," said Voshchev, embarrassed that so many people had their minds on him alone, at that moment. "I only think here" (Platonov 1975, 13). The cartesian equation of thinking with existence is turned upside down because "Voshchev thinks where he does not exist and exists, where he does not think" (Марун 2010, 65-95). It is a point of madness when the subject is ontologically ungrounded, disembodied and disunited from reality, and this pushes him back into the state of the absolute singularity of self-referential cogito. "The grief and longing of Unhappy Self-consciousness" (Hegel 1977, 456) is to open the window of monadic existence and go beyond himself to restore the path of access to the distorted reality. However, Voshchev's unhappy self-consciousness consists of the inability to repair the broken world, and the gulf gets even wider between his inward and outer experiences of reality. The cause of madness is the

impossibility to touch and getting into contact with the lost object. Hegel's definition of madness could have been seen as an explication of Voshchev's internal struggle with himself and with the world:

> Madness is a state in which the mind is shut up within itself, has sunk into itself, whose peculiarity (…) consists in its being no longer in immediate contact with actuality but in having positively separated itself from it[6] (Bond 1994, 71-99).

This asymmetric relation of thought and existence, their disjuncture, alienates the subject from the world in which he is supposed to exist. However, where does Voshchev really exist?

Platonov's play with Descartes continuous in the short story "Rubbish Wind", published in 1933, as an allegorical response to the political process in Germany, culminating in Hitler's usurpation of power. Svetlana Proskurina had suggested that the secret motif of "Rubbish Wind" is the increasing dissolution of Platonov's faith in the communist idea[7]. The main protagonist of the novel, Albert Lichtenberg, whose name is a combination of the name and surname of two physicist - Albert Einstein and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, set himself against Hitler, but eventually could not succeed and is gradually transformed into a creature. Perpetrators have already taken his tortured life, but his second death represents disdain to his own body, part of which he cut off to feed the starving mad woman who rocks the cradles of her dead children. The epigraph of the novel taken from "the thousand and one nights" is ominous: "Leave my madness and summon those who have taken away my mind". Albert Lichtenberg's madness is the result of a state power making him a creature inhabiting "bare life", where the line between madness and reason is blurred. The anti-Nazi Albert Lichtenberg, severely beaten and tortured by Nazis exclaimed:

> Great Adolf! You have forgotten Descartes: when he was forbidden to act, fright made him start to think, and he recognized in horror that he existed,

> that is–once again – that he acted. I too think and exist. And if I live, that means you cannot be! You do not exist!"
>
> "Descartes is a fool!" Lichtenberg said out loud and he began to listen to the sounds of his wandering thought. "What thinks cannot exist, my thought is a forbidden life, and soon I shall die... Hitler doesn't think – he arrests, Alfred Rosenberg thinks only what is meaningless, the Pope has never thought at all, but they exist all the same! (Platonov 2009, 77).

The exposition of "creaturely life" in the "Rubbish Wind" constitutes an obscene and uncanny image of a human becoming an animal. At the begging of the story, Lichtenberg saw that:

> (…) his wife had become an animal: the down on her cheeks had turned into a coat of hair, her eyes had a rabid gleam and her mouth was filled with the saliva of greed and sensuality; she was uttering over his face the cries of her dead madness (Platonov 2009, 2-4).

However, as I underlined above, the most horrific and abject somatic crisis happened to Lichtenberg himself, who cut the part of his leg to save the woman, who also belongs to the sphere of "bare life". Lichtenberg dies by bleeding and she dies of starvation. His self-sacrifice for the madwoman does not redeem her life and what remains is an empty gesture of self-mortification. Platonov makes the reader see the cannibalism of the totalitarian state, which capture Lichtenberg's life and reduces him to zero degrees of existence. At the end of the story, a police officer representing the state power comes into the house, where he finds the dead woman and eats still warm meat. Lichtenberg's wife, who accompanies the police officer, found the dead body of her husband, but she could not recognize him and, instead, saw an "unknown animal". "The primitive man who had grown a coat of hair, but that most likely it was a large monkey someone had mutilated and then, as a joke, dressed up in scraps of human clothing" (Platonov 2009, 79).

Lichtenberg's violent death shows not only his exclusion from human life and the sadistic treatment of animals, but it symbolically

represents *desubjectivised* humans, who have turned into "mutilated cripples" of totalitarian *thanatopolitics*.

III. PLATONOV - THE SNAKE CHARMER

Varlam Shalamov, recounting in his "Kolyma Tales" about the monstrosity of life in Gulag, experienced the same "creaturely" existence in the "bare life" of the camp. As Giorgio Agamben puts it, Nazi or Soviet concentration camps were the material realizations of the state of exception[8], which was the governmental paradigm based on the coercion and exclusion of people during totalitarian rule. However, Agamben goes even further by associating the same political logic to contemporary secularized states and liberal democracy, seeing in it the latent and well-disguised inclination towards the total control of the individual. Shalamov depicts in his stories multiple tortured and psychologically mutilated characters, who were reduced to "bare life", where they lived as goners ("dokhodiagi"), which Alexander Etkind referred to as "the soon-to-be-dead" (Etkind 2013, 26).

Shalamov thought that the experimental narrative structure and magical realism of the Russian writers Andrey Siniavsky and Yuli Daniel could not represent the horror of the camp through the "grotesque" and "satire." Shalamov is often considered a realist writer, trying to incorporate the traumatic memory of Gulag into literary form. He even reproached Siniavsky and Daniel for relying on the fantastic, which contradicts his own experience in Gulag. According to Shalamov, "neither Siniavsky nor Daniel has seen those rivers of blood that we saw" (Etkind 2013, 129). As if Shalamov wanted to show the ethical primacy of the experience of witnessing over the grotesque and fantastic representation of the camp. However, considering Shalamov as a realist writer would have been unfair, because, he relied on fantasy and fictional animation of camp's "bare life". Shalamov, in his short story "The Snake Charmer", creates the imaginary field of an encounter between

himself and Andrey Fyodorovich Platonov. He constructs the fictional counterpart of the real Platonov, only changing the name of his father. The fictional Platonov was a storyteller who survived only due to his entertaining role. He recounted stories to the local criminal authority and, in exchange, got protection and food. Due to sudden death, "Platonov" could not write the book about the snake charmer and Shalamov took the responsibility to materialize the dream of a person whom he loved. Shalamov constructed peculiar toponymy of the horrific place called Dzhankhara, which presumably has been taken from Platonov's novel "Dzhan":

> Platonov was telling me the story of his life here - our second life in this world. I frowned at the mention of Dzhankhara. I had been in some bad and difficult places myself, but the terrible fame of *Dzhankhara* resounded far and near (Chandler 2005, 323).

Robert Chandler also assumes that the name of the terrible site of the camp, *Dzhankhara*, could have been a syntagmatic construction, the first part of which reverberates to the title of Platonov's novel "Dzhan." Dzhan is a nomadic people of the desert deprived of the meaning of life; they represent groundlessness and inertia of "creaturely" existence, for whom death could have been the possibility of redemption. They are not reduced to "bare life" by sovereign decision. It is their natural living condition and the Soviet regime has decided to send the former member of this community, Chagataev, to find the lost people and educate them in a socialist manner.

Shalamov's "The Snake Charmer" preceded the first publication of Platonov's "Dzhan", but Robert Chandler brings forth an argument that Shalamov could have read or heard about Platonov's novel during the time between 1931 and 1937, when he was living in Moscow and was working as a journalist. However, Chandler is cautious and assumes that "Shalamov is deliberately leaving the reader in a state of uncertainty: the reader can neither be confident that Shalamov has the real Platonov in mind, nor be unaware of this possibility"[9]. Alexander Etkind saw in "The Snake Charmer" the

allegory of a writer created by Shalamov. For the sake of survival, even the fictional writer allegedly bearing the name of the real Platonov has to succumb and enchant the power through his stories. However, despite the magical effects of stories on criminals, there can be a constant sense of danger and violence. According to Etkind "Shalamov saw the Soviet writer as a doomed snake charmer, a magician who mesmerizes the public because, if he fails to do so, the public will beat him to death" (Etkind 2013, 223).

NOTES

1. The translation is mine: "Платонов — огромный писатель, которого не замечали, — только потому, что он не помещался в ящиках, по которым раскладывали литературу."
2. "Литературные доходы были относительно значительны в прошлом, но за последние два три года он фактически не печатается и никаких гонораров не получает. Живет бедно. Среду профессиональных литераторов избегает. Непрочные и не очень дружеские отношения поддерживает с небольшим кругом писателей. Тем не менее среди писателей популярен и очень высоко оценивается как мастер."
3. Lane, Tora. *Andrey Platonov, The Forgotten Dream of the Revolution*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018.
4. *See* Lupton, Julia. "Creature Caliban." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2000): 6.
5. For elaboration on the idea of "impossible infrastructure" in Platonov's Foundation Pit, *See* Wark, McKenzie. *Molecular Red*: *Theory for the Anthropocene*, (London: Verso, 2015).
6. I owe this quote from Hegel's Encyclopedia to Daniel-Berthold Bond, "Hegel on Madness and Tragedy," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (1994): 71-99.
7. Елена Проскурина, "Социализм как фашизм: рассказ А. Платонова "Мусорный ветер"" *Критика и семиотика*, 1, 18 (2013): 186-199.
8. *See* Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 98.
9. http://www.stosvet.net/12/chandler/index2.html

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A Postmodernist Reading of Imagery in Eugene O'Neill's "The Iceman Cometh": Human Identity Redefined

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Abstract. The characters, in Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, are remarkably motionless, drinking and daydreaming. However, their portrayal is based upon motion and continuous shift from one image to another. These images are meant to reflect the (post)modern psychological and socio-political conditions in which the derelicts are trapped, and probe issues related to human existence and human identity. Much has been said about the characters in O'Neill's play and their portrayal in a way that reflects the playwright's nihilistic vision about Man and society. However, the bulky images employed in the play still open new horizons of interpretation. In this context, the paper attempts to read the device of imagery as a dramatic and textual device and decipher its different meanings as far as the question of human identity is concerned. Imagery and its role in determining Man's definition will be studied from the psychoanalytical, poststructuralist and postmodernist perspectives.

Psychoanalytical, poststructuralist and postmodernist theories share the common feature of escaping the linguistic sign and opening the possibility of dealing with a reality unmediated by language. These theories offer a solid background to revisit the classical definition of Man, as suggested by classical theories of the Enlightenment and rationalism, providing new possibilities to go beyond the linguistic determinants of meaning. Drawing from notions suggested by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Jean François Lyotard, the paper proposes an exploration of imagery in *The Iceman Cometh* towards a redefined concept of human identity that blurs boundaries between the human and the non-human.

Keywords: imagery, classical, modern, postmodern, animal, human

1. Introduction

Excessive, controversial and prolific, imagery is a stylistic device that helps writers create artistic portraits in their texts and evoke themes

so emblematic that words alone fail to convey. "The image gives quality, creates atmosphere and conveys emotion in a way no precise description, however clear and accurate, can possibly do" (9), says Caroline Spurgeon in *Shakespeare's Imagery*, arguing for the complexity and richness of such a device. As far as dramatic texts are concerned, imagery seems to be very persuasive in telling about the playwright's concerns and beliefs. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the imagery of darkness, incest and guilt can hardly be contained in simply descriptive words. William Shakespeare's classical tragedy *Kind Lear* is another instance of the functional role of imagery as a dramatic technique:

Gloucester. As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods.
They kill us for their sports (IV.2.)
[…]
Lear. Blow winds and crack your cheeks, rage low […]
And thou all-shaking thunder, strike flat the thick
Rotundity O'th' word. (IV.4)

Several of the main themes of Shakespeare's *King Lear* are inherent in images of beasts, animals, storms and other natural elements. Such images connote universal themes like lust, deceitfulness, jealousy, cruelty, and envy.

The use of imagery, however, is not a feature of classical drama only. Suggestive as it is, imagery remains a device of paramount importance in the modern dramatic text. In Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, imagery is abundantly employed revealing the dialectical situation of a desire to express and the failure of words to articulate the inexpressible. The collapse of the world and the absurdity of modern life are readily communicated through the use of imagery in O'Neill's play. First-generation critics like Christopher Bigsby find in imagery a way to reflect the fallacies of an inverted social consciousness and the struggle between the individual and his society. Through images of darkness and decay, the playwright ironically conveys society's efforts to enforce its "lifeless standards" upon spiritually crippled and marginalized characters (Bigsby 136).

Likewise, in "Eugene O'Neill as Social Critic," Doris M. Alexander argues that the sense of nihilism in the play is the outcome of the failure of a political system striving for power over others to compensate for its inner failure (358).

Additionally, in *O'Neill: Son and Artist*, Louis Sheaffer highlights the autobiographical element of imagery in the play, claiming that the device is used to create the sense of self-delusion through which Man can escape reality and endure life (450). John P. Diggins, in *O'Neill's America: Desire under Democracy*, equally associates the use of imagery with the playwright's life and his perception of Man's relation with God and society which is based on the idealistic endeavour for perfection even if it meant the suffocation of the self and the drowning into images of darkness and illusion (16).

Other critics discussed the use of masks as the physical performance of imagery in the written text. In this respect, masks as a type of performed imagery are equivalent to the grotesque and animal imagery in the written text. Oscar Cargill and Eugene Waith, for instance, suggest that, through the mask, O'Neill projects the tension of disintegrated consciousness and the inner reality of characters who try to conceal their concerns yet they fail[1]. Likewise, Robert Whitman posits that the mask O'Neill uses "is not simply a superficial façade the individual uses to hide from the world but the perversion of a basic side of his personality or nature" (153).

Second generation critics similarly address imagery and probe its different motifs and motives in O'Neill's play. In *Eugene O'Neill and the Reinvention of Theatre Aesthetics*, Thierry Dubost stresses another aspect of imagery in *The Iceman Cometh*, stating that it expresses the playwright's religious and cultural attitudes: "The image of the earth turned into hell belongs to Christian imagery and was close to O'Neill's culture" (57), he explains. Dubost adds that moving from the convention of the "problem play" O'Neill revisited the theatre aesthetics resorting to masks, silence and imagery.

In *Hopes of the Human Race in Eugene O'Neill's plays*, Veena Neerudu examines the use of imagery from a social and philosophical perspective arguing that *The Iceman Cometh* is "more humanistic and

symbolic as it is mainly concerned with society and the nature of Man (39). Through imagery, the playwright underlines the tragic conditions of modern Man who is alienated and struggling in an industrial society. Such a struggle, Neerudu believes, is represented through characters living on pipedreams as a way to escape their bleak reality (39).

Although they provide an insightful basis for the use of imagery in O'Neill's play, these views overlook crucial issues related to imagery in O'Neill's text, namely the psychoanalytical element of imagery and the poststructuralist/postmodernist attitude toward language as a powerful medium of articulation. Indeed, through the device of imagery, O'Neill persistently looks for modes of breaking barriers of representation toward deeper, ineffable meanings. Drawing from psychoanalytical and postmodernist theories this paper proposes an exploration of imagery in *The Iceman Cometh* and its different meanings that go beyond the social and the cultural to reach the aesthetic and the political.

2. Imagery in Eugene O'Neill's "The Iceman Cometh"

In Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, imagery is startling, deliberate and abundant all through the play. In fact, imagery is recurrently used to reflect the characters' psychology and create the convenient mood and the thematic concern of the play. Imagery is so diverse in *The Iceman Cometh* that it readily falls into four categories: animal imagery, the grotesque, ghost and beast imagery, imagery of nature or vegetation, and imagery of filth. The recurrence of such imagery is deliberately meant to evoke various (post)modern questions related to socio-political issues. This stylistic device also prevails in the play to be readily connected to the *mise-en-scène* as a theatrical technique.

Animal Imagery

O'Neill presents his characters as a gathering of hardly seen shadows

who are victimized by society, by their own will, and by their haunting memories. They are epitomes of people who are reduced to a state of motionlessness and meaninglessness, being portrayed as sub-human, even as animals. Harry Hope's saloon is, indeed, transformed into an animal farm or a "modern zoo" through the device of animal imagery. Himself, Harry Hope, for instance, "has a face of an old family horse" (O'Neill 7). Jimmy Tomorrow "has a mouse-coloured thinning hair, a little nose, and buck teeth in a small rabbit mouth" (6). Cecil Lewis's complexion is "that of a turkey" (6). Larry Slade "is shaking in his sleep like an old dog" (14). Chuck's eyes "are clear and he looks healthy and strong as an ox" (70). Hugo "thrusts his head down on his arms like an ostrich hiding its head in the sand" (201). Wetjoen, addressing Lewis, says: "Lewis, we should have taken you to the London Zoo and incarcerated you in the baboon's cage" (143). Hugo calls the denizens: "leedle monkey-faces?" (105). The abundant use of animal imagery can be read as O'Neill's portrayal of his characters, and hence Man, as an emblem of deterioration, decay and bestiality. Such animalistic portraits are further emphasized by the device of the grotesque.

The Grotesque

The Grotesque is generally "anything distorted, ugly, abnormal, fantastic or bizarre to the point of being ridiculous or absurd" (Morner and Raush 93). Applied to decorative art, the term grotesque denotes a style in which fantastic representations of human and animal forms are combined and interwoven to form a strange compound (93). Seen from this perspective, the grotesque in *The Iceman Cometh* may pertain to the paradigm of imagery insofar as it is a category of caricatured images based on clash and disproportion. The grotesque is clear in the description of the derelicts, adding a gloomy tone to the already established zoological portrait of Man: "Hugo is a small man in his late fifties; he had a head much too big for his body, a square face with a pug nose" (O'Neill 4). Larry also "has a gaunt Irish face with a big nose" (4). Willie Oban has "blond hair, badly in need of a cut" and "clings in

a limp part to his skull" (8). Ed Mosher, "like McGloin, is slovenly. His head is thrown back, his big mouth open" (7). Harry Hope is "so thin; the description "bag of bones" was made for him" (7). It is obvious that through the grotesque, O'Neill caricatures his characters and turns them into beast-like creatures, deformed beings, and even motionless ghosts, confirming to Timo Muller's statement in *The Self as Object in Modernist Fiction* that "modernism in the arts seems to become more chaotic, or at least more confusing, the longer one looks at it" (10).

Ghost Imagery

Throughout the play, a ghostly shadow keeps hovering around Harry Hope's saloon. The ghost image is reflected in almost every character. For instance, Jimmy Tomorrow's "speech is educated, with the ghost of a scotch rhythm in it" (O'Neill 6). Willie Oban is depicted as a ghost with his clothes which "belong on a scarecrow" (8). Hickey appears as an incarnation of the death ghost when he "sleeps like a dead man" (88). Cora adds that Hickey is "[o]ld cemetery! That's him. Hickey!" (111). The latter ironically comments: "We don't want corpses at this feast" (143). Through ghost images, O'Neill deepens the doom and the gloom of the "half-dead" denizens and portrays them as paralyzed "wax figures" overwhelmed by darkness and death (212). Hickey, for instance, is haunted by his dead wife's ghost throughout the play.

The other characters are symbolically portrayed as slumbering and lifeless ghosts whose only meaningful motion is either "yawning" or "sighing". Such animal, ghost, and grotesque images create characters who oscillate between life and death, the human and the animal in a way that revises the classical centrifugal definition of Man as a unified whole and a harmonious total. Respectively, in *O'Neill's America: Desire under Democracy,* John P. Diggins stresses the bar denizens' inability to conform to the classical definition of Man, arguing that in O'Neill's plays "characters rarely progress toward self-realization or even to the beginnings of a higher order of understanding" (262). Diggins

points out that in *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *The Iceman Cometh*, the characters are too overwhelmed with discrepancy to achieve a proper state of being. Hence, "they can never be sure who they are or where they belong, or what it is that they want or what it is that obstructs them from getting it" (262). Animal imagery and the grotesque are the playwright's means to account for this sense of discord and distortion characterizing modern Man's portrait.

Imagery of Nature

Images of nature are also functional in depicting the characters' situation throughout the play. Unlike classical drama where nature is depicted as a lush and fertile realm in which the tragic hero finds refuge and consolation - King Lear, for instance, finds in nature a warm shelter during the storm scene (IV.4) - nature in *The Iceman Cometh* is barren, dark, and gloomy. The imagery of the "willow tree" is reiterated throughout the play as an emblem of barrenness and death. Toward the end of the play, the characters "(Shout in enthusiastic chorus) `Tis cool beneath the "willow trees" (O'Neill 260). The "willow tree" here is a functional image that is reminiscent of the cemetery and the grave and that stresses the tragic situation of psychological death in which O'Neill's characters are vulnerably caught. "The bottom of the sea" imagery is also frequently referred to throughout the play. Paritt says: "You can't hide from yourself, not even here on the bottom of the sea" (123). On his arrival, Hickey advises the derelicts: "Let yourselves sink down to the bottom of the sea and rest in peace" (86).

The imagery of nature is then meant to underline the funeral-like existence led by the inhabitants of Harry Hope's saloon, to establish the idea of the "no outlet" by the frequent recurrence to "the bottom of the sea" analogies and portray the conditions of the characters who belong to a metaphorical "Waste Land" which is remarkably and extremely dark and filthy.

Imagery of Filth

In *The Iceman Cometh*, mud, filth, decomposition and decay are

equally key images. Indeed, the description of the setting turns around the periphery of dust. "The right wall of the backroom is a dirty black curtain" (3) and the "two windows [are] so glazed with grime one cannot see through them" (3). Moreover, "the walls and ceiling once were white, but it was a long time ago, and they are now, splotched, peeled, stained and dusty that their colour can be best described as dirty" (63). This grimy atmosphere is further established through Larry's philosophy and his description of his surrounding: "The material, the ideal society must be constructed from is Men themselves and you can't build a marble temple out of a mixture of mud and manure" (30). Later in the play, Larry views his own life as "a dirty, stinking bit of withered old flesh" (66). Likewise, in his long confession in Act IV, Hickey sees himself as "something lying in the gutter [and] such a rotten shunk" (235).

3. Functions of Imagery in "The Iceman Cometh"

Autobiographical Element

Filth and decomposition images are meant to tell about the total insignificance of the human species when considered biologically as well as modern Man's impossibility of ever-achieving transcendence and substantial unity. The abundantly employed imagery is indeed so functional that it tells about the playwright's predilections and constructs the main themes of the play. In *O'Neill: Son and Artist*, Louis Sheaffer points to the biographical element of imagery in the play, relating it to the playwright's own experiences:

> *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and *Hughie* are literally suffused with images of sickness and death. The first two are set in 1912, a watershed year in O'Neill's life, a year which saw his attempted suicide at Jimmy the Priest's New York waterfront dive where he had been living with bums and outcasts. (518)

In a letter about *The Iceman Cometh* to Theatre Guild producer, Lawrence Lagner confessed: "Personally, I love it and I am sure my

affection is not wholly inspired by the nostalgia for the clear dead days on the bottom of the sea" (qtd. in Berlin 86).

Jimmy the Priest's, O'Neill's most frequented bar in New York, becomes Harry Hope's Saloon in the play and all the other characters are, indeed, real. O'Neill admits that:

> Harry Hope and all the others, the anarchists and Wobblies and French syndicalists, the broken men, the tarts, the bartenders and even the saloon itself are real. It is not one place, perhaps it is several places that I lived in at one time or another […]. I once knew, put together in one. (qtd. in Berlin 85)

Therefore, the imagery of decay, gloom, and darkness in the play can be read as the outcome of O'Neill's own perception of a life lived with the pains of sickness and disillusionment. Seen from this perspective, the imagery of vegetation (willow tree) and "the bottom of the sea" may readily be relevant to the construction of the biographical element in the play.

Social Reality

"Every true drama is a mirror of its epoch; its characters mirror those social classes that, so to speak, embody the avant-garde of the objective spirit" (51), Peter Szondi explains. Whether a stylistic or a theatrical device, imagery tells about the destruction of the myth of the perfect Man. It creates a visual effect reflecting the gloomy mood in which the mythical portrait of the idealized Man is destroyed. It is also O'Neill's vision of the world and perhaps no one could expect an optimistic vision of life from a man struggling with the pain of sickness and agony.

The various images of the barflies and the stagnant obscure atmosphere are a replication of modern Man's situation of loss and despair. Man, like the bar dwellers, has lost his origins, his identity, his moral values, his conscience, his sense of time and place, and his relationship with the other. In short, Man has lost his humanity and become a beast imprisoned in darkness and oblivion. This is due to the fact that many modernist schools of thought clang to one term in their definition of Man, reducing the diversity of human life to

one single constituent. For instance, "Marxism, stressed the agent as the motivating force, reducing human action to the interplay of class forces. Darwinism, conversely, focused only on the scenic background in which the struggle for survival took place" (Genter 145-46). Modern philosophy trapped Man within narrow meanings and failed to address his complexities. In this sense, imagery in *The Iceman Cometh* is the playwright's way to address Modern Man's concerns and the sense of diversity that should be the core of his identity.

Through recurrent imagery, the play turns into an artistic portrait depicting a gloomy social, psychological and historical reality and conforming to the modernist trend in which drama "climb[s] down the social ladder […] from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie in the 18th century, […] to the naturalistic incorporation of the proletariat" (Szondi 50-51). Imagery in modern drama stems from a real environment presenting Man in conflict with himself. It is no longer celestial dealing with a mythic struggle between divine powers and Man. The device of imagery is rather "an expression of the negative condition of a waiting being - one in need of transcendence but unable to achieve it" (54).

4. Imagery: From a Stylistic to a Theatrical Device

Animal imagery, the grotesque, the imagery of the sea bottom and filth are a symbolic reflection of a reality witnessed by O'Neill. However, the device of imagery can be appropriate only when we consider *The Iceman Cometh* as a text to be read. Imagery is abundantly recurrent in the stage directions. Though very functional in the dramatic text, stage directions become of less significance when it comes to the theatrical performance of the play, becoming no more than informative signs to the actors. This will lead to the vanishing of animal, and beast images. Nonetheless, though transformed from a written text into performed dialogue and action, the play's atmosphere remains a realm of ghost-like creatures and gloominess

and imagery, as a stylistic device in the dramatic text, is transformed into a theatrical technique readily detected in the lighting, the decor and the costumes and makeup.

Lighting

The general mood of the *Iceman Cometh* is characterized by gloom and fuzziness. O'Neill himself insists, in the stage directions, that it is not appropriate to bathe the stage in light: "Light comes from the street windows off right, the grey subdued light of early morning in a narrow street" (O'Neill 4). *The Iceman Cometh* needs a highly sophisticated lighting technique, for it is not possible to present it without the precise light details that O'Neill himself emphasizes in every stage direction of the play: "lighting comes from a single wall bracket" (3).

These specific details, together with the dusky light which filters through the windows of the bar suggesting a state of darkness and the blurring of the distinction between night and day throw the inhabitants of the saloon, as well as the audience, in a kind of a mysterious universe with all its depressing silence and its gloomy ceremonial celebration of darkness and oblivion. So, lighting, as an element of the *mise-en-scène*, is quite functional in as much as it creates the same thematic concerns already established by animal, ghost and beast imagery.

Décor

The décor is another essential element of the mise-en-scène. O'Neill impresses his audience with the simple and rudimentary features of the decor. The stage consists of a poorly furnished bar room with juxtaposed tables and chairs: "The black room is crammed with round tables and chairs placed so close together that it is a difficult squeeze to pass between them" (3). The decor of "the backroom" is so telling of a state of disorder and overcrowdedness: "The right wall of the backroom is a dirty curtain" (3). The filth of the decor is a manifestation of the abundant imagery of dirt and repulsion in the written text. The bareness of the decor highlights a modernist

conception of the audience. Brecht insists on the bare decor to destroy the illusion of life on stage. Indeed, modern drama is keen on not achieving the catharsis effect on the part of the audience. The simplicity of the decor is the modern playwright's way to create the A-effect[2] and ensure the distancing of the spectators so as to increase their critical ability.

In *Theory of Modern Drama*, Peter Szondi argues that imagery in modern drama is part of a transitional "stylistic change" (45) meant to rescue the European as well as the American stage from "the crisis experienced by the drama at the nineteenth century" (45). This stylistic change, including imagery, "radicalizes the alienation" (60) and, thus, destroys the illusion of life through bare stage decor and deformed characters. Images of filth are then used in the play - whether written or performed – not only to create the alienation effect but also to symbolize the state of confusion, loss, dislocation and decay of the barflies whose costumes and makeup unveil much about them.

Costumes and Makeup

Of equal significance is the choice of costumes. Like the setting, costumes are dirty and ragged. Hugo, for instance, is "dressed in threadbare black clothes and white shirt frayed at collar and cuffs" (O'Neill 4). Joe Mott is "wearing a light suit that had once been flashingly sporty that is now about to fall apart" (5). Larry's "clothes are dirty and much slept in" (4). McGloin "wears old clothes" (7), and Willie Oban's "clothes […] belong on a scarecrow" (8). Therefore, in an atmosphere of decay and decadence, costumes contribute to the projection of the distorted reality of those who wear them. Costumes turn the derelicts into eccentric creatures that are out of place and out of time. The makeup of the characters adds to their deformity and aggravates their state of gloom and ugliness. Cora, for instance, "[…] is drunk, dressed in her gaudy best, her face plastered with rouge and mascara, her hair a bit dishevelled, her hat on anyhow" (185). So, the costumes and the makeup in the play, as a performance, are as functional as the imagery of animals, ghosts

and the grotesque. Both, indeed, portray the inhabitants of the saloon as gloomy, slumberous, and mysterious creatures.

Through the light mechanism in the play, the decor, the costumes and the makeup, the playwright skillfully creates a visual effect that is so expressive of a general mood of a modern life haunted by the ghost of war and death.

> During the years when the Depression was taking its toll on this country, the storm clouds of war were rapidly gathering over Europe and Asia. Preoccupied with […] recovering from the scars of World War I, a war in which it seemed to many the U.S. had paid a price for allowing itself to be involved in the disputes of other countries. (Wertheim 2)

The Americans of the late 1930s, who were dealing with the harsh impacts of the Depression and imminent war, were inclined to "pacifism and splendid isolation" (2) and to avert their eyes from what was happening beyond their land. Art provided an escape from the depressing reality of the time. Although this sense of escapism is irrelevant to the bleak world of *The Iceman Cometh*, the pipe dreams of the dwellers of Harry Hope's saloon are an ironic reflection of the era's need for an escape from the tension of daily life. "The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober" (O'Neill 16), says Larry in Act I, admitting the pipe dream's necessity to escape from the horrors of modern life.

5. Imagery in "The Iceman Cometh": The Philosophical, Psychoanalytical and the Postmodernist

The Philosophical

Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy claiming the "death of God" and his questioning of reality are clearly present in the saloon's images of decay, darkness and doubt about religion. In O'Neill's encounter with religion, "it is understandable that he would be attracted to

Nietzsche and think that he could regard the once shocking saying 'God is dead' as a celebration" (Diggins 184).

Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution, usurping the vantage point of Man in the universe and reducing him to a state of bestiality, is also relevant to the thematic course of the play and the portrayal of the characters as animals and beasts through the device of animal imagery. O'Neill's sense of trauma upon discovering the discrepancy between religion and modern science is reflected in his nihilistic vision of Man's existence.

> With modernists like Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, O'Neill no longer saw Man at the center of a benevolent universe whose energies could be brought under control. At the same time, to accept a godless world is to live without meaning and significance. (196)

O'Neill's reflections on Man's struggle to populate his world with meaning and spiritual truth are voiced by Larry's confessions:

> I'm afraid to live, am I? — and even more afraid to die! So I sit here, with my pride drowned on the bottom of a bottle, keeping drunk so I won't see myself shaking in my britches with fright, or hear myself whining and praying: Beloved Christ, let me live a little longer at any price! If it's only for a few days more, or a few hours even, have mercy, Almighty God, and let me still clutch greedily to my yellow heart this sweet treasure, this jewel beyond price, this dirty, stinking bit of withered old flesh which is my beautiful little life! (170)

Such confessions ironically confirm O'Neill's belief that people need religion even though it leads them to a condition of perpetual struggle, suffering and disillusionment. Larry's words show how religion compels humankind to seek rescue from exterior forces, preventing the mind from its will, and turning Man into an animal-like mindless creature driven by his emotions and instinctive desires.

O'Neill's predilection to the portrayal of the derelicts as lethargic beasts, motionless ghosts, and deformed "sub-human" creatures is certainly a deliberate and symbolic unveiling of the disturbing image of Man in the modern world. Indeed, the "great" war and the massive death of Man are reflected in the apocalyptic dark

atmosphere of the saloon which can be seen as a microcosm of the world with its sense of decay, stagnation, and cynicism.

Drawing from dirty and repulsive images, the device of imagery can be described as a modern device, which highlights a philosophical stand about the other and reiterates Plautus definition of man as "*Homohomini lupus*" (qtd. in Freud 58), meaning that every human being is potentially a werewolf to the other. "Hello, leedle Harry! Hello, nice, leedle, funny monkey-faces! […] Gottamned stupid bourgeois! Soon comes the Day of Judgment! (O'Neill 213), Hugo addresses the denizens overtly voicing the werewolf in him and his hostility towards them.

The Psychoanalytical

Sigmund Freud's speculation about the "wolfman" can be plausibly read in animal, ghost and grotesque images in the play. In *Civilization and its Discontent*, Freud argues that Man sees in the other a potential tempter to satisfy his governing sense of aggressiveness. He tends to humiliate, cause pain, and torture the other (58) in order to satisfy his instinctive drives and pleasures. Man's erotic propulsion, Freud explains, may trigger a new form of defiance by the desire to destroy. In this sense, the animal drives are not merely part of culture; they are rather its essence. Animal imagery and the verbal tension between the characters in *The Iceman Cometh*, as well as their desire to exterminate each other, are the manifestation of the animal and the instinct of aggression toward the other.

The Freudian revolution in psychoanalysis and the dissection of the modern Man into perpetually conflicting polarities (Ego - Superego - Ed) led to the destruction of the myth of Man as a sovereign unified entity. This is quite clear in the depiction of the denizens who keep struggling to understand themselves and give meaning to their existence, yet in vain. The characters' description also projects such psychological findings. That the inhabitants of Harry Hope's saloon are nearer to ghosts, beasts, and "wax figures" (212) than to human beings is in fact indicative of a sense of revision

of human identity and an attempt to delve into the labyrinths of the human psyche.

The Post-Structuralist / Postmodernist

Though established as a modernist play, *The Iceman Cometh* can readily be classified as a postmodernist script through the study of animal imagery. In "The Animal That Therefore I Am", Jacque Derrida highlights the significance of animal imagery in the postmodernist work of art, stressing its political dimension:

> We had above all to explore the logics organizing both the submission of the beast (and the living being) to political sovereignty, and an irresistible overloaded analogy between the beast and a sovereign supposed to share a space of some exteriority with respect to law and right. (Farrell Krell 13)

Animal imagery is in this vein is the playwright's instrument to take the work "outside the law, and above the law" and reconsider "the origin and foundation of the law" (13). Questions about what is proper to the human condition and the lines of demarcation between the human and the animal can be raised through animal imagery in the construction of characters. Accordingly, animal imagery in the postmodernist text brings forth Derrida's conclusion that "bestiality/bêtise can be proper to man in relation to his own kind and foreign to the animal" (14), and hence it has to be highlighted in the portrayal of characters in the narrative or dramatic text.

According to Derrida**,** what the beast and the human share is their "outlaw" status; that is their readiness to exist outside the law. The figures of the beast and the sovereign are reflected in the image of the derelicts who are trying to escape their human reality and share a past record of crime and lawlessness. Their bestiality is further highlighted through their association with different animal figures as well as their eagerness to "sink down to the bottom of the sea and rest in peace" (O'Neill 86), invoking Derrida's description of "*le fond sans fond*" or the bottomless foundation in his criticism of

the classical definition of human identity and the distinction between the human and the animal.

In *The Iceman Cometh*, Hickey's advice to the derelicts to go down to the bottom of the sea and rest in peace, as well as Larry Slade's description of the place as "the No Chance Saloon […], the End of the Line Cate, the Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller" (O'Neill 61), are suggestive of the sense of an ending characterizing the classical definition of Man and the necessity to inquire about the essence of Man in a postmodern age of hybridity and difference:

> At bottom, who or what is the beast and who or what is the sovereign? At bottom, if there is a bottom, a ground or foundation for an answer? Or do we confront here once again *le fond sans fond*, the bottomless foundation? (Farell Krell 18)

Going down to the bottom of the sea is a metaphorical quest for identity that ironically reveals the baseless argument about human sovereignty and uncovers the inadequacy of the classical self-proclaimed qualities of the human being.

In Derrida's view, bestiality is the very essence of Man, for humankind is essentially *bête* in that its philosophers always try to appropriate for the other species features they believe to be proper to them. To try the distinction "human vs. animal" is itself a *bêtise*, argues Derrida. Meanwhile, "no animal is capable of *bêtise* or any other beastly act, for the beastly and the insane are qualities proper to the ratiocinative humankind" (17). In this context, Derrida talks about the modern zoo, especially the "animal-friendly zoo" where exercised care can conceal and substitute iron cages. These are zoos "with a liberal, idealist and spiritualist grimace" (398), which are reminiscent of Michel Foucault's image of the asylum where the mad faces enclosure combined with friendly care. Respectively, Harry Hope's saloon in which O'Neill's characters are incarcerated becomes an "animal-friendly zoo" and an asylum in which the distinction between the human and the animal becomes blurred.

In postmodernist conception, the pure categorization of human vs. animal has a political and ideological dimension and is based on

false premises. Pure categorization as a grand narrative is called into question to be substituted by mini-narratives of plurality and hybridity. Linked to this is the argument that pure categorization is created and "used politically to include one group, such as humans, whilst excluding another, such as animals" (Taylor 39). These pure categories are in fact about power in the Foucauldian sense whereby power lies in the discourse. In this case, the discourse is that of the distinction animal vs. human in which the human represents culture, reason and language while the animal stands for irrationality, bestiality and instinct. This grand narrative, deeply rooted in the western discourse as absolute truth, is debunked in *The Iceman Cometh* through the depiction of characters living on the margins of humanity and exhibiting animal attributes in their physical description.

In postmodern theory, nothing is absolute or certain. "All absolute values become sites of questioning, of rethinking, of new kinds of affirmation" (Bennett and Royle 280). This implies that postmodern theory and practice highlights the "undecidable" and rejects the rational restraints of modernism. In this context, the boundary between the animal and the human becomes blurred and human identity is revised as Derrida explains, suggesting a sense of confusion upon the human encounter with the animal other. Sitting like animals in a dark cage-like setting and driven by the pleasure principle (cf. an addiction to alcohol and sexual desire), characters in *The Iceman Cometh* become figurative animals governed by the instincts of desire and disorder.

The intersection between the human and the animal can equally be explained in terms of privileging the body over the mind in reaction to the rationalism of the renaissance philosophy. In fact, "neither the aesthetics of modernism nor the philosophical values of humanism […] can cope easily with hybrid forms which unsettle boundaries, most especially the boundaries of the human and the non-human" (Baker 99). In the modernist conception, there is an inclination to homogenize and organize the human-animal relationship as a way to attain meaning and eliminate dissimilarity

and disintegration. Conversely, the postmodernist thought celebrates the bodily drives and denounces the grand narrative of Man as a rational being which led to more political corruption and further dehumanization of the subject. Animal imagery in *The Iceman Cometh* is meant to criticize such a classical story of violation and injustice whereby gender, class, and race categorization deprived humans of their rights and reduced them to the figurative status of animals.

In a postmodernist orientation, Michel Foucault rejects the difference-excluding definition of Man in classical schools of thought. He argues that difference is of paramount significance in establishing the human identity, and marginalized groups who are excluded due to their difference have to be voiced and included in the postmodern definition of humanity. In *The History of Sexuality I*, Foucault argues that post-Renaissance culture is authoritarian and egocentric as it is keen on the marginalization and demonization of difference by setting standards of behaviour and by establishing strictly controlled institutions, like insane asylums, prisons, and hospitals, in order to deal with the other who is different. These institutions are the embodiment of political power and a means by which a dominant group can impose its control on difference, described as perversion and lawlessness. "Doubtless acts 'contrary to nature' were stamped as especially abominable, but they were perceived simply as an extreme form of acts 'against the law'" (Foucault 38).

In this respect, animal imagery and the grotesque in *The Iceman Cometh* can be read as an ironic investment in difference in the postmodern centrifugal definition of Man as synonymous with hybridity, plurality, and otherness. The device also voices the other "that was overlooked by the law, but not so neglectful of itself that it did not go on producing more species, even where there was no order to fit into" (Foucault 43). The proliferation of selves in postmodern Man's definition and the blurring of boundaries between centre and periphery, and between human and animal, in the character construction in *The Iceman Cometh* reflect the

Foucauldian suggestion about "the implantation of multiple perversions […] and taking revenge on a power that has thrust on it an excessively repressive law" (49).

In *The Postmodern Animal*, Steve Baker states that even victims who counter-violence are equally reduced to the same figurative animal status (100). Indeed, perpetrators and victims of violence become alike in undergoing the dehumanization experience. In *The Iceman Cometh*, animal imagery is aesthetically and politically employed to highlight the postmodern conception of the borderless human-animal relationship. The different characters in the play are violent toward each other, becoming both victims and perpetrators and sharing the process of dehumanization and undergoing a border-crossing experience leading to a postmodern condition of hybridity and "humanimalism".

Respectively, Baker argues that a common feature of the postmodernist conception is the characterization of the human self or body as "impure, hybrid or monstrous" (99). He explains that modernity is a repressive "process of purification" excluding "any monster or hybrid" that threatens to move beyond the border. Likewise, in *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs*, Nina Lykke suggests that in postmodernism there exists a "cyborg" realm where such "creatures are becoming more and more common and their repression, conversely, less and less successful" (16). She explains that the "cyborg" realm is where hybrid creatures, excluded in modernist discourses, proliferate and coexist with the human. In the postmodernist hypothesis, the "cyborg" is the outcome of rejecting the modernist fear of contamination by the other, such as the animal. The "cyborg" is thus a step toward impurity, monstrosity and hybridity as an aesthetic act of creation. Animal and filth images in *The Iceman Cometh* fall within the employment of the "cyborg" as a metaphor of plurality and open-endedness.

In *Struggle, Defeat or Rebirth: Eugene O'Neill's Vision of Humanity*, Thierry Dubost states that in O'Neill's play "the conclusion drawn is that the fusion of two human beings can take place only in the world of pipe dreams" (102). Through the device of animal imagery,

the fusion happens at a more universal level to include the human and the animal and turn the characters into hybrid "cyborgs". In the same vein, in "Cyborgs and Symbionts", Donna J. Harraway focuses on the political dimension of the "cyborg," explaining that it "has a subversive power, [being] the source of a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (160). Likewise, Mark Hutchinson argues that "the monster might prove to be a more complete idea of subjectivity than the rational, moral western subject" (144). He adds that the monstrous work is a way of escaping the modernist law of morality, being a means to experience pleasure and intensity and overcome the constraints of aesthetic and moralistic judgment (147). Being the cornerstone of Western philosophical thought, the single unified subject is revisited through the notion of the "cyborg" to be substituted by a "humanimal" - a hybrid and fluid subject.

In *The Iceman Cometh*, animal imagery employed in the portrayal of the derelicts is crucial in Deleuze and Guattari's process of "becoming-animal" and the sweeping away of self-centred conceptions of the subject, turning the denizens into "cyborgs" with a fluid and heterogeneous identity. "Leedle *monkey faces* […], soon, leedle proletarians, vevill have free picnic in the cool shade, vevill eat hot dogs and drink free beer beneath the villow trees! Like hogs, yes! *Like beautiful leedle hogs*!" (O'Neill 105), Hugo addresses his mates using animal-saturated imagery and simile and revealing his emotional commitment to the dream of a new border-crossing identity.

In *Kafka*, Deleuze and Guattari stipulate that "becoming-animal" is reached through a "deterritorialization" process, or the "unhumaning" of the human, "which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself" (35). Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "deterritorialization" is built upon the Nietzschean assumption of the cosmos as the incessant becoming of a multiplicity of interconnected forces of no stable entities, and which must be understood in terms of difference rather than singularity. The "becoming-animal" is, therefore, part of the

postmodernist endeavour to decenter the subject of singularity and unity toward a more hybrid identity that blurs the lines between the self and the other.

"Becoming-animal" testifies to the incredibility of the grand narrative of Man as a supreme and unique creature privileged with reason and language. In *Kafka*, Deleuze and Guattari claim:

> There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the world […]. There is no longer a man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other […] in a continuum of reversible intensities […]. There is no longer a subject […]. Rather, there is a circuit of states that forms a mutual becoming, in the heart of a necessarily multiple or collective assemblage. (22)

In their attempt to establish a plural and hybrid identity, Deleuze and Guattari conclude that the animal is "still too close, still too perceptible, too visible, too individuated" (37-38) and that the animal is capable of showing Man how to overcome the rigid definition of the subject and how to exist beyond the constraints of such a definition.

This very notion of "becoming-animal" or turning into a "cyborg" corresponds to Jean François Lyotard's argument about moving away from grand narratives and resisting self-contented certainties of sovereignty and singularity in order to create a collective multiplicity of the subject. "We no longer have recourse to the grand narrative. […] The grand narrative has lost its credibility," (76) stresses Lyotard confirming that it is part of living in a postmodern world that grand narratives are no longer credible. Instead, multiple mini-narratives are constructed to stand against the grand narrative's confining authoritarianism.

In *The Inhuman*, Lyotard criticizes the modern era's "techno-science" forces that attempt to exclude the body and make life possible without it. "Techno-scientists" strive to reduce humanity to its alleged essence, which is reason, and make this possible in computer-program forms, trying "to make thought without a body possible; a thought that continues to exist after the death of the

human body" (13). The human being, as body and reason, has no place in the new order of things and reducing Man to a thought process is an act of exclusion and repression. Lyotard claims that abstract thought and phenomenological body are inseparable, explaining that

> what makes thought and the body inseparable isn't just that the latter is the indispensable hardware for the former, a material prerequisite of its existence. It's that each of them is analogous to the other in its relationship with its respective (sensible, symbolic) environment: the relationship being analogical in both cases. In this description, there are convincing grounds for not supporting the hypothesis of a principle of the "separability" of intelligence, a principle [...] through which he could legitimate an attempt to create artificial intelligence. (16)

Resisting these dehumanization attempts is an ethical commitment to defend difference which has to be advocated in rejection of the human identity as dictated by the grand narratives of modernity. Animal imagery in O'Neill's play emphasizes the character's bodies and equates their identity with difference. This device even enables the playwright to go a step further and favour the body over the thought, creating a new human identity characterized by openness, plurality, and difference.

Conclusion

Imagery in O'Neill's work is an open field of meanings that cannot be constructed by words. Connected to the grotesque and animal images, the characters and their environment can be described as a reflection of modern Man's portrait resting upon decay, illusion and meaninglessness. Imagery can also be an ironic revisiting of the rigid definition of the human being as a sovereign and rational entity. The device of imagery can equally be a projection of the human *psyche* and its perpetually conflicting forces. It is likewise an expression of the postmodernist definition of Man as a being constructed upon

difference and hybridity. Whether approached with classical or postmodernist lenses, imagery remains the playwright's instrument towards meanings that go beyond the barriers of words, telling much about the human identity though nothing seems to be articulated.

What often escapes the notice of critics who deal with imagery in *The Iceman Cometh* as a reflection of modern Man's portrait and reality is the fact that this device plays a crucial role in creating another image of Man constructed upon the internal workings and conflicting forces of the human *psyche*. Imagery is also employed to highlight the postmodernist argument about the end of the linguistic sign's sovereignty as inscribed within established modes of representation. Hence, imagery uncovers the "betrayal of reality by signs" (Baudrillard 48) and destroys the classical definition of Man toward a larger concept of human identity going beyond rationalism, singularity and unity.

NOTES

1. For a further discussion of the use of masks in O'Neill's plays see Oscar Cargill. "Fusion-point of Jung and Nietzsche. In *O'Neill and His Plays*. Ed. Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion Fagin and Wiliam J. Fisher. New York: New York University Press, 1970 and Eugene M. Waith. "Eugene O'Neill: An Exercise in Unmasking*". Educational Theatre Journal.* 13.3. (1961): 182-191.
2. The Alienation effect is the English translation of Bertolt Brecht's term "verfremdungseffekt", which is a dramatic effect aimed at encouraging an attitude of critical detachment on the part of the audience instead of submitting to realistic illusion. Different techniques like interrupting the play's action, sudden changes and switching of roles are aimed at stimulating a rational view of history as a changeable process rather than a fate to be accepted as predetermined (Baldick 7).

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN WASHINGTON IRVING'S "RIP VAN WINKLE"

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Abstract. This essay examines Washington Irving's short story "Rip Van Winkle" from an autobiographical perspective by focusing on the commonality and resemblance between the author and his fictional hero. It suggests that Rip and Irving have many similar traits which underline the deeply personal and subjective dimension of the tale. It begins by considering some of these traits such as idleness, generosity and kind-heartedness. It claims that both Rip and Irving are characterized by their benevolence and altruism which account for their belovedness. After discussing these attributes, the essay focuses on other common characteristics such as the tendency to pull away from matrimony. In this matter, both Irving and Rip's possible homosexuality are considered. Although there is no clear evidence that they are homosexuals, this essay suggests that they both seem to have a repulsive attitude towards heterosexuality. The essay then concludes by examining some of the shared views and perspectives between the writer and his character. It suggests that both Irving and Rip are characterized by their aversion to politics and by their deep love of nature. Due to the numerous and striking resemblances between the fictional hero and his creator, this essay argues that Rip is a reflection of Irving's character and personality.

Keywords: Irving, idleness, generosity, kind-heartedness, homosexual, queer, politics, nature

1. INTRODUCTION

Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" is a gothic fantasy that was published in 1819 and included in his collection of 34 essays and short stories entitled *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*. Along with "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," it is one of the most popular

fictional short stories in American literature for which Irving is best remembered. Although it is widely believed that this tale is based on Johann Karl Christoph Nachtigal's German folktale "Peter Klaus," Irving uses typically American settings and materials through which he adapts it to the New World. Set in New York's Catskill Mountains in the Revolutionary War period, "Rip Van Winkle" describes the enchanted sleep of a Dutch American man who awakens after twenty years and finds himself in a totally changed world. He realizes that the King George the Third sign above the local tavern is transformed into a portrait of someone called General Washington and he recognizes none of the inhabitants of the village. He also notices that the character of these people is significantly changed as they talk about strange political parties and incomprehensible concepts such as liberty, elections, Congress and the rights of citizens. Rip's confusion and bewilderment are so great that he doubts his own identity and believes that he is another man. In his description of Rip's loss of identity in this new democratic world, Irving emphasizes the deep and enormous changes that have taken place in American life and culture during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In fact, the story represents "the transformation of America from pastoral innocence to 'bustling' and 'disputatious' commercialism" (Rosenblum 2003, 212). This transformation consists mainly of America's move from an agricultural to an industrial economy which promoted a culture of consumption and led to the emergence of a new lifestyle characterized by materialism and the worship of money. As is the case in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," Irving expresses his dissatisfaction with these changes in "Rip Van Winkle" by portraying a world in which identity is fluid rather than fixed and in which people can easily lose their place in the world. In the latter tale, Rip largely "reflects the plight of Americans who emerged from their revolution aware that everything's changed but not fully aware of who they now were" (Bendixen 2017, 32). Through this character, Irving expresses his nostalgia for a stable and ideal past when life was simple, quiet, peaceful and happy.

To a large extent, the character of Rip mirrors Irving's own personality in the story since they both have not only similar traits and attributes but also identical beliefs and attitudes toward various issues such as matrimony, politics and the environment. For this reason, "Rip Van Winkle" might be considered as an autobiographical story in which Irving gives an account of his life and character by impersonating his fictional hero. Even though Irving might not have intended his tale to be autobiographical, the study of his parallels with Rip is undoubtedly significant because it underlines the author's remarkable ability to use his fictional tale as a description of his own nature and disposition. The importance of the study also consists in highlighting Irving's ability to use his story as a form of expression through which he articulates his own personal thoughts and beliefs. These aspects of his writing have been mentioned by some scholars and critics over the last century. In her 1908 prize essay on Irving's works and character, for example, Winifred Romney suggests that "[t]o know Irving the man is to know Irving the writer, for his works are but a reflection of his personality. He possessed to a greater degree than any other author the gift of impersonating himself in his books" (26). She argues that the "charm his books possess is but the reflection of the indescribable charm of his personality. In his books, his gentle spirit glows out as it did from his radiant nature" (27). The silent and half-concealed humour that characterizes Irving's personality, she further claims, is weaved into many of his works such as "Knickerbocker's History," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle." In her essay, Romney also suggests that there is a "marked resemblance between Irving and his humorously portrayed character, Rip Van Winkle" (25) and that they have similar characteristics. Although Romney briefly mentions some of these characteristics, she focuses mostly on Irving's qualities, literary style and contribution to American literature rather than on his resemblance to Rip and on the biographical evidence that demonstrates it.

More recently, Irving's use of his fiction as a form of expression

has been mentioned by Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky in his 1986 essay entitled "Washington Irving and the Genesis of the Fictional Sketch." In this essay, Rubin-Dorsky argues that the fictional stories in *The Sketch Book* are based on Irving's actual physical and emotional experiences which are described within a narrative, rather than a documentary framework (226). Rubin-Dorsky also suggests that Irving uses the pseudonym of Geoffrey Crayon as a way of documenting these experiences without revealing their subjectivity. He states that this pseudonym enabled Irving to "examine and reflect upon these experiences while remaining detached enough to perceive their significance. Crayon, in other words, became a buffer between Irving and the world. Thus, the creation of a fictional traveller/persona solved an emotional need and concurrently led to the beginning of a new genre in American literature" (226-27). Through this pseudonym, Irving was able not only to adapt his fictional sketches to his own psychological purposes but also to endow them with an aesthetic appeal that went "far beyond the rather crude explication of scene and setting of the typical travel sketch" (Rubin-Dorsky 1986/87, 226). Irving's use of the fictional sketch to describe his own physical and emotional experiences has also been mentioned by other critics in addition to Rubin-Dorsky. In "Love in the Catskills," for instance, Richard Ellmann suggests that "Rip Van Winkle" is a "parable" of Irving's life which consists in "the presentation, with as much directness as possible, of the meaning of Irving's experience as a man in the world" (27). Ellmann also claims that Irving's tale is a "sifting of his personal emotion" (27) and that it echoes his personal problems and psychological needs. Although Irving's use of "Rip Van Winkle" as a means of expressing his own feelings and emotions has been emphasized by many critics, however, the autobiographical elements in this tale have not been thoroughly analyzed. In fact, most of the research on this topic has focused on Irving's adaptation of the story to his own psychological needs rather than on his moral, intellectual and behavioural characteristics and the ways they are reflected through the character of Rip. The studies which raised this subject were also

fragmentary because they dealt exclusively either with Irving or with his fictional hero.

2. Common Traits between Rip and Irving: Idleness, Generosity and Kind-Heartedness

One of the most common traits between Irving and his fictional hero is idleness. In Rip's case, his idleness is noticeable mostly through his negligence of his family responsibilities and his refusal to work on his farm. Because of his indolence, his family continuously suffers from poverty and his farm is badly kept. Its fences are broken down, weeds grow all over it and everything about it goes wrong. Irving underlines Rip's idleness by claiming that he has "an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour" and that he "would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound" (30-31). Obviously, Rip does not see any profit in labour and he does not mind eating white bread or brown. His indolence is also evident through his frequent visits to the local inn where he spends much time with other idle people who enjoy "talking listlessly over village gossip or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing" (32). Even after his twenty-year sleep in the Catskill Mountains, his aversion to work remains unchanged as he resumes his old habits of idleness and once again takes his place on the bench in the tavern where he keeps talking with his new friends and telling his story to every stranger who comes to the place. As an old man, he is no longer embarrassed or ashamed about being indolent. Having nothing to do at his daughter's house where he now lives, the tale's narrator states, he is proud of "being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle, with impunity" (40). For these reasons, Rip might be considered as the typical indolent person whose indifferent attitude toward the accumulation of wealth runs counter to the principles of the American dream. Rip's attitude undoubtedly highlights his resemblance to his creator. Irving, too, was an easy-going man who disliked laborious work and enjoyed being idle. Like

Rip, he thought that work is not more important than leisure and he was not obsessed with wealth and material abundance. His "inclination to idleness" (Axson 1933, 183) was one of the most notable of his few and minor personal faults. This trait has been emphasized by many of his critics and biographers who examined his life and character.

One of the biographers who mentioned Irving's aversion to work and his inclination to idleness is James Playsted Wood. In *Sunnyside: A Life of Washington Irving*, Wood claims that Irving

> disliked regular work and, unless fascinated by some compelling subject, avoided it. He preferred play. Even more, he preferred doing nothing. Indolence and lassitude are only literary terms for what the Victorians condemned as laziness and modern American civilization applauds as leisure. Most people have always liked it, and they liked seeing Irving celebrate and practice it in *The Sketch Book* and his other books of essays and stories. Irving was often depressed, more often in his earlier years as a writer from doing nothing than from trying to do too much. When he was really interested, he worked tirelessly and, though sometimes disappointed in his daily performance, without depression. (154)

Wood's claim underlines the fact that Irving was naturally indolent and that he celebrates rather than condemns Rip's habits of idleness in the tale. Irving's tendency to be indolent was noticeable not only in his early career as a writer but also in his boyhood when he disliked going to school and found it too tedious and boring. Although he enjoyed reading books outside the classroom, he was an indifferent schoolboy and he did not have any ambitions for school honours. As many of his biographers suggest, Irving was not a good student and he did not learn much at school[1]. Instead of attending school, he preferred exploring the byways of New York where he became familiar with "every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen" (qtd. in Jones 2008, 8). Moreover, Irving never attended college and he spent six years studying law at the office of Josiah Ogden Hoffman. Although he barely passed the bar exam in 1806, he did not care much for law as a career and he soon abandoned it to write full-time. When he

started his profession as a writer, his indolence was equally evident. Despite the enormous success of his 1809 book entitled *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York* which brought him fame and popularity, he did not write another book for ten years and "his pen was almost wholly idle" (Hill 1879, 62). The reason why the success of the *History* did not immediately determine his choice of literature as a profession might be explained by the fact that "writing for a livelihood seemed to him too confining, too laborious, and too precarious" (Hill 1879, 60). In his account of Irving's life, George William Curtis also confirms this idea by claiming that Irving was still "a gilded youth who enjoyed the gay idleness of society, and who found in writing only another and pleasant recreation" (260). Although Irving edited a literary journal called *The Analectic Magazine* between 1813 and 1815, he also found this job so wearisome that he readily left it. Thereafter, he spent most of his time enjoying his leisure by travelling to many European countries such as Germany, France, Austria and Spain where he tried to find new subjects to write about. During this period, Irving's idleness was undoubtedly excessive and he himself later admitted it when he confirmed the fact that he "seemed to drift without aim or object" in these years and that he went to Europe because he hoped to overcome his "idle habits and idle associates" (qtd. in Bates 2010, 506).

Irving's inclination to idleness continued throughout his literary career. According to his biographer David Jayne Hill, the failure of his 1824 collection of essays and short stories entitled *The Tales of a Traveller* "was attributed by the highest authorities to Irving's indolence, rather than to his want of genius" (96). As a matter of fact, Irving's work was harshly criticized by many critics and reviewers[2] both in England and America. Most of them were disappointed with the work and they blamed Irving for his diversion from his original style in *The Sketch Book*. Irving was so deeply touched by these violent criticisms that his pen was once again almost totally idle. For instance, he soon abandoned the engagement to edit the British classics and he busied himself in studying the Spanish language. He even regretted his choice of literature as a

profession and, in a letter to his nephew, he dissuaded him from having such a career (Hill 1879, 97-8). In 1839, Irving once more admitted his idleness when he expressed his willingness to contribute to the pages of the *Knickerbocker Magazine* which was published in the city of New York. In his letter to Lewis Gaylord Clark, the editor of this magazine, Irving describes his aversion to hard work in the following manner: "I am tired, however, of writing volumes: they do not afford exactly the relief I require; there is too much preparation, arrangement, and parade in this set form of coming before the public. I am growing too indolent and unambitious for anything that requires labour or display" (qtd. in P. Irving 2001, 148). In his letter, Irving also accounts for his desire to be engaged with this magazine by his wish to be more at his ease in writing about the subjects that come to his mind. Irving's connection to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, however, lasted only two years after which time he focused on writing other books and biographies. When taking these facts into consideration, the similarity between Irving and Rip becomes obvious.

Another similar attribute between Irving and his fictional hero is generosity. From the beginning of the story, the tale-teller underlines Rip's magnanimity by claiming that "he would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolicks for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences" (30). The women of the village often ask him to do some of the hardest jobs that their husbands refuse to do. Despite his indolence and aversion to work, he would never hesitate to offer his help and support on such occasions. His kind-heartedness is also evident through his tendency to assist not only his neighbours and friends but also the people he does not know. This idea is emphasized in Irving's description of Rip's actions and behaviour when he meets a strange man carrying a heavy keg full of liquor on his back in one of the highest parts of the Catskill Mountains. Despite his shyness and distrust of this individual, Irving states, Rip immediately complies with his request for help and, "with his usual alacrity" (33), he assists him in transporting the keg to the

desired location. Inside this location, Rip's kindness is noticeable when he serves liquor to the mysterious and odd-looking figures despite his fear and apprehension. The examples that illustrate Rip's generosity are numerous in the story. They all suggest that Rip is always "ready to attend to anybody's business but is own" (30). Like Rip, Irving was characterized by his benevolence and altruism which were some of his most remarkable qualities. In his life, he also tended to assist his friends whenever they needed his help or support. As Romney suggests, "[n]o one ever appealed to Irving for sympathy in vain. His sensitive disposition was always touched by the least suggestion of pain or sorrow, and, prompted by his kindness of heart, he quickly responded to the entreaties of all who were seeking alleviation from care or distress" (25). In fact, Irving's generosity was so great that he sometimes sacrificed his own interests for the benefit of other people even when they were strangers to him. This aspect of his character has been mentioned in many of his biographies.

One of the most well-known examples that underline Irving's generosity and kind-heartedness consists in his abandonment of the work upon which he engaged himself, "The History of the Conquest of Mexico," to the young writer William H. Prescott who was also working on the same subject. Not only did Irving voluntarily relinquish his intentions but also he assisted the latter by sending him all the works and materials he had collected in Spain. "What makes the act of surrender the more generous on Irving's part," Hill suggests, "is the fact that he had already sketched the first draught of his first volume, while Mr Prescott had not gone beyond the accumulation of materials" (147). Despite the fact that Irving's act left him in a difficult professional and financial situation[3], he did not seem to regret it. Irving's magnanimity was also noticeable through his kind treatment of other writers in addition to Prescott. In fact, Irving was characterized by his utmost respect for the feelings of young authors as well as old and famous ones. He tended to encourage them and to avoid criticizing their work even when he perceived some flaws and defects. As Hill states in his biography,

Irving's "generous treatment of other writers, many of whom were his competitors for public favour, is one of the most pleasing features of his life. Scarcely a word of disparagement can be found anywhere in his writings or remembered from his conversation" (214). One of the young writers that Irving encouraged and supported is George Ticknor. When this author sent his "History of Spanish Literature" to Irving, the latter responded as follows: "When I have once read it through, I shall keep it by me, like a Stilton cheese, to give a dig into whenever I want a relishing morsel" (qtd. in Hill 1879, 214). Similarly, Irving expressed his favourable opinion when he was asked about Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. He said that it is "[m]asterly! masterly! masterly!" (qtd. in Hill 1879, 214). In his life, Irving encouraged many other writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, James Fenimore Cooper and Donald G. Mitchell.

Irving's magnanimity and kind-heartedness are undoubtedly some of the main reasons that account for his belovedness[4]. As a matter of fact, he was greatly admired and well-liked by his friends and "[i]t is said that he had no enemies" (Romney 1908, 25). His belovedness was remarkable from his boyhood when his friends and acquaintances enjoyed his company and spent regular time with him. In his life, he was loved and esteemed not only in New York but also in many other places in America. As Stockton Axson suggests, Irving's "handsome, smiling face, wholesomeness, ready wit, won him welcome from Ballston Spa to Baltimore, not excepting Washington, where glorious Dolly Madison had him for guest in the Executive Mansion, and the President himself would relax to listen to the easeful talk, salted with worldly wisdom, from this darling of society" (187-88). Evidently, Irving was liked not only by his friends but also by noted people and politicians. According to Axson, King George the Fourth was also attracted to Irving and enjoyed spending time with him. He claims that "George IV, like everyone else, was attracted to Irving, and seems to have put forward only whatever little good was in him in Irving's society" (188). Similarly, Irving's fictional hero is admired and beloved by everybody in the village, with the exception of his wife. As the tale's narrator suggests,

Rip is a "great favourite" among the inhabitants of the community and he is possessed of "universal popularity" (30). The children shout with joy at his appearance and even the dogs seem to be contented as none of them barks at him. The women of the village appreciate his simplicity, good nature and meekness of spirit. They also often sympathize with him whenever things go wrong and they try to comfort him and ease his distress. After his enchanted sleep, Rip also makes many new friends among the rising generation "with whom he soon grew into great favour" (40). He becomes one of the most respected and venerated people in the community where is considered as a chronicle of the old times before the revolution. Rip's belovedness further highlights the resemblance between him and his creator. In his description of Rip's character and personality, Irving is largely portraying his own ones. Numerous other characteristics reflect the similarity between them.

3. Rip and Irving's Possible Homosexuality

Although there is no firm evidence that Rip and Irving are homosexuals, there are many undeniable hints of their repulsive attitude towards heterosexuality. As far as Rip is concerned, his same-sex attraction could be ascertained through his strong dislike of his wife and his hatred of matrimony. On the most superficial level, Rip escapes from Dame Van Winkle because he is a henpecked husband who cannot endure the scolding and tyranny of his termagant wife. On the most important level, he leaves his spouse because he is possibly a homosexual who detests the firmly established sexual norms and standards in his village. His rejection of these standards is underlined by his frequent visits to the local tavern where he enjoys socializing with people of the same sex. It is only in this place that he can find consolation and relief in times of distress. In the story, his seemingly queer sexuality is mostly emphasized at the moment when he is informed about the death of his wife. "There was a drop of comfort at least in this intelligence,"

Irving states, "he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle" (39-41). As the statement denotes, Rip feels uncomfortable with his wife probably because he cannot satisfy his sexual appetite with her. Her death might allow him to be freer in having same-sex relationships. As far as Irving is concerned, his homosexual orientation is also likely. In fact, he was a lifelong bachelor and he often expressed his animosity towards marriage after the death of his fiancée, Matilda Hoffman, in 1809. Although he might have proposed marriage to an English girl named Emily Foster in 1823, his proposal was undoubtedly rejected as most of his biographers claim. His misfortunes in love and matrimony could have had a significant effect on his sexual behaviour. "Frustrated in matters of the heart," Jones suggests in his biography, "he never married and was, in all likelihood, a homosexual" (x).

Irving's attempt to get married does not mean that he is a heterosexual. Although he might have liked and admired Matilda for her beauty and delicacy, for instance, his willingness to marry her might be explained by his desire to achieve his objective of financial stability and security. It might also be explained by his endeavour to hide his homosexuality in order to be loved and respected by his family, friends and readers. As Jones argues, "it is not unlikely that Irving, as a closeted homosexual, would willingly enter into a marriage with a woman he may have idolized but didn't love, not only for the financial stability but also to keep up the public appearance that he was straight" (88). After Matilda's death, Irving accounted for his distaste for marriage by his great sadness and disappointment at the loss of his beloved. This might have been another way of hiding his queer sexual behaviour from the public. Similarly, his possible marriage proposal to Emily can be explained by his eagerness to achieve the same purpose. Actually, Irving's indulgence in homosexual behaviour may have started even before his attempt to get married[5]. In 1806, for example, he had a group of friends with whom he often used to drink and to do many leisure activities. Among the most notable of these friends are Henry

Brevoort, Gouverneur Kemble and James K. Paulding. According to many biographers, Irving's relationship with these people was not only strong but also unusual. In his biography of his father James Paulding, for instance, William Irving Paulding states that the relationship between them "became more closely bound in an unusual friendship. The relations which united this little group were of the most intimate. A confidence even beyond that of brothers existed among them; a confidence which, it is believed, was never violated under any circumstances, on any hand" (37). Paulding's statement justifies the claim that Irving might have indulged in homosexual behaviour with these friends. Although there is no clear evidence to determine the truth of this presumption, there are some signs which suggest that it is likely.

One of the main signs which point to the possibility that Irving had homosexual relationships with his friends consists in his feeling of deep anxiety when he learned, in 1816, that James Paulding got engaged to Gouverneur Kemble's sister and that Brevoort might also have been considering marriage. The latter probability worried him so greatly that he could not easily contain his "black mood" because he would certainly "miss the links that bind together bachelors" (Jones 2008, 142). Although he wrote Brevoort a letter in which he encouraged the marriage, he was undoubtedly against it. This was evident through his reaction when he found out that Brevoort was not actually seeking marriage. In fact, he was not only happy but also relieved that his intimate friend would not forsake him for a wife. His feelings of joy and delight were openly expressed in another letter to Brevoort in which he stated the following:

> You will smile when I tell you that, after all the grave advice I once gave you about getting married, I really felt regret on fancying, from the purport of one of your letters, that you had some serious thoughts of the kind; and that I have indulged in selfish congratulation on finding nothing in your subsequent letter to warrant such an idea . . . if I am doomed to live an old bachelor, I am anxious to have good company. I cannot bear that all my old companions should launch away into the married state and leave me alone . . . it is a consoling and a cherished thought with me, under every vicissitude; that I

> shall still be able to return home, nestle comfortably down beside you, and have wherewithal to shelter me from the storms and buffetings of this uncertain world. (qtd. in Jones 2008, 143)

Irving's letter underlines not only his opposition to marriage but also his unusual relationship with Brevoort. In many ways, their relationship seems to be as strong as that between husband and wife due to the fact that Brevoort provides Irving with comfort, affection and security in the upheavals and hardships of life. It is mainly for this reason that Irving feels anxious to be abandoned by his close friend. Irving's sentiment is somehow similar to that of Rip who also fears losing his male companions. In the story, Rip's fear is mostly emphasized at the moment when he is informed about the death of many of his old and close friends such as Nicholaus Vedder and Brom Dutcher. At this moment, the tale's narrator states, "Rip's heart died away" (38). Rip is also disheartened at the disappearance of his companion Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, who went off to the wars. Rip's enormous sadness as a result of these changes might be considered as an indication of his homosexual orientation. The death and disappearance of his male friends mean that he is now "alone in the world" (38), without love and support. Consequently, he makes other male friends among the rising generation with whom he can have good company and with whom he can enjoy the freedom of bachelorhood without fear or distress.

In the story, Rip's seemingly queer sexual behaviour is also noticeable in the scene which describes his experience on the mountain where he meets multiple male figures. In this scene, Rip seems to be pleased and joyful when he encounters the man carrying the keg on his back. His initial feelings of anxiety and apprehension might be explained by his fear of Dame Van Winkle and of the dangers of breaking away from the heterosexual norms of his village rather than indulging in homosexual relationships. In fact, Rip's homosexual desire seems to be greater than his fear as he immediately complies with the request of this individual and they start "mutually relieving each other" (33) while ascending the

mountain. Rip seems to find it hard to control his homosexual needs as he thinks that "there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity" (34). In the amphitheatre where he later finds himself, Rip's fear might also be explained by the same reason. Despite his distrust of the strange men playing at ninepins, however, his attitude gradually changes as he witnesses their "party of pleasure" (34). He even ventures to taste their beverage which he appreciates and drinks avidly. Throughout the scene, Irving's use of such words as pleasure, tempted and reiterated are all indicative of a homosexual atmosphere. Whether Rip indulged in same-sex relationships with these figures is probable although not explicitly mentioned. Irving might have hinted at it by claiming that Rip's "senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head – his head gradually declined and he fell into a deep sleep" (35). Although Rip's lethargy and drowsiness seem to be caused exclusively by alcohol, they may also be caused by homosexual acts due to the fact that his relationship with his male companions appears to be more natural than that with his wife. Therefore, his experience on the mountain emphasizes the possibility that he has a negative attitude towards heterosexuality similar to that of his creator.

4. Rip and Irving's Aversion to Politics and their Genuine Love of Nature

One of the common attitudes between Irving and his fictional hero is the aversion to politics. In Rip's opinion, for instance, politics is not only uninteresting but also incomprehensible. This is most evident through the description of his confusion and bewilderment when he returns to his village on election day and hears many political terms which are a "perfect Babylonish jargon" (37) to him. When one of the tavern politicians asks him whether he is a Federal or Democrat, he is unable to comprehend and answer the question. When asked on which side he voted, he is equally at a loss to

understand the question and does not respond to it. Because he slept through the American Revolution and missed the war, he does not have any idea about such political matters and he even announces his loyalty to King George the Third which arouses the fury of the crowd around him. His disinclination for politics is so strong that he does not care to understand the strange events that took place during his torpor. The American independence from the British crown seems to him as an insignificant and trifling incident. As Irving states, "Rip in fact was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him" (40). In his description of Rip's distaste for politics, Irving largely articulates his own thoughts and beliefs about this issue. In his life, the latter was also averse to politics and found it unimportant and full of perplexity. As he himself wrote, "I am not a politician" (qtd. in Axson 1933, 188). Even though he had a long career in diplomacy and served as American minister to Spain from 1842 to 1846, he often expressed his strong disgust with politics. After he failed to obtain a position as a clerk in one of the courts, for example, he was deeply sickened by "the servility and duplicity and rascality I have witnessed among the swarms of scrub politicians who crawl about the great metropolis of our State like so many vermin about the head of the body politic" (qtd. in Curtis 1894, 261). Irving's distaste for political life and his reluctance to take an active part in it were noticeable throughout his life.

Irving's aversion to politics can be illustrated by many examples and incidents. In 1834, for instance, he declined a nomination for Congress offered to him by the Jackson party. In 1838, he also rejected the Tammany nomination as mayor of New York and refused an offer from President Van Buren to make him Secretary of the Navy (Myers 1976, 124). His declination of these posts might be explained by his great sensitivity to any sort of rebuke or criticism which he could have faced if he had accepted them. As he himself stated in his reply to Van Buren's nomination, he rejected the offer because he shrank from "the harsh cares and turmoils of public and political life at Washington" and because he was "too sensitive to

endure the bitter personal hostility and the slanders and misrepresentations of the press which beset high station in this country" (qtd. in Adams 1870, 250). It is also for this reason that he reluctantly accepted to be appointed as Minister to Spain in 1842. His acceptance of this office from President Tyler might be accounted for by the fact that he would face less rebuke in representing his country than in representing its parties. His disinclination to engage himself in political life was also noticeable through his attitude toward many political issues of the mid-nineteenth century. According to Axson, Irving was "unagitated by the political conditions which were leading inevitably to war" (188). In fact, he ignored the 1846 proposal to ban slavery within the land acquired from Mexico in the Mexican-American War. This proposal, known as the Wilmot Proviso, was so controversial and disputatious that he was unwilling to comment upon it. Similarly, he did not want to comment on many other issues such as the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the Fugitive Slave Law and the controversies between President Andrew Jackson and Vice President John C. Calhoun. His detachment from these issues highlights his disinterest in politics and his unwillingness to get involved in anything which might divide people[6]. This attitude further underlines his resemblance to the protagonist of "Rip Van Winkle" who also does not make any comment on the tumultuous political changes in his country.

Rip and Irving's dislike of politics stands in sharp contrast with their genuine love of nature. Both of them are characterized by their deep appreciation of the beauties of the natural environment and by their close connection to it. In the story, Rip's fondness for nature is emphasized by the fact that he spends most of his time in the woods and forests where he enjoys looking at the magnificent and charming scenes. To him, nature is an earthly paradise offered to humans by God. The tale-teller underscores his fascination with nature by claiming that he "would carry a fowling piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods, and swamps and uphill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons" (30). Rip's frequent and extended retreats to nature are not solely

caused by his hatred of his wife and his eagerness to escape from her. Obviously, he considers nature as a source of inspiration and pleasure in which he can enjoy himself and have fun. The fact that his best companion is an element of nature, his dog named Wolf, also highlights his love of the natural environment and his communion with it. Rip not only adores Wolf but also sympathizes with him in his pains and sufferings whenever he is the target of Dame Van Winkle's anger. "[N]ever mind my lad," he would tell him, "whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" (32). The bonds between them are so strong that they seem to be inseparable. Rip usually takes Wolf with him in his walks to the Catskill Mountains where he enjoys his dog's company. In these mountains, Rip's love of nature is noticeable mainly through his great sensibility to the grandeur, sublimity and splendour of the natural landscapes surrounding him. When he beholds the Hudson River, mountains and dense forests from his highly elevated position, for instance, he evidently experiences feelings of admiration and awe as he lays for some time "musing on this scene" (33). It is mostly the majesty and glory of the Hudson scenery which surprise and amaze him. The river, forests and mountains all form an enthralling and charming panorama that is so striking that it appears to Rip as a world in and by itself.

Rip's feelings and attitude when he first looks at this sublime natural landscape are similar to those of Irving during his first voyage up the Hudson in 1800. The latter, who travelled up this river on a sloop before the invention of steamboats and railroads, was also charmed and awestruck by its breathtaking beauty and magnificence. He expressed his admiration of the Hudson scenery in a letter in which he detailedly described this journey. In this letter, he states that he was intensely delighted by the wonderful beauties of the Hudson River whose glassy stream reflected trees, rocks, clouds and sky. Although he beheld many other notable rivers in Europe, he claims, the pictures of the lovely Hudson can never be dimmed or effaced. "To me, the Hudson is full of storied associations, connected as it is with some of the happiest portions

of my life", he states, "[e]ach striking feature brings to mind some early adventure or enjoyment; some favourite companion who shared it with me; some fair object, perchance, of youthful admiration" (qtd. in Bruce 1913, 12). He suggests that the Hudson reminds him of his joyful boyhood and keeps his heart from growing old. Actually, Irving was the first American writer to describe the beauty and grandeur of the Hudson River. Through his writings and romantic tales, he largely popularized it by emphasizing its resplendence and impressiveness. In his voyage, Irving admired not only the river but also the various natural landscapes around it such as the Highlands and the Catskill Mountains. He thought that these mountains are the most alluring and enchanting of the entire scenery. In his letter, he articulates this belief by claiming that "of all the scenery of the Hudson, the Kaatskill Mountains had the most witching effect on my boyish imagination. Never shall I forget the effect upon me of the first view of them predominating over a wide extent of country, part wild, woody, and rugged part softened away into all the graces of cultivation" (qtd. in Bruce 1913, 11). While laying on the deck, he further states, he kept watching the changes and transformations of these mountains under the magical effects of the atmosphere. They sometimes seemed to approach and, at other times, appeared to recede. At one moment, they seemed to be melting into the misty distance; at another, they looked as if they were burnished by the setting sun. Irving's pleasure and excitement in watching the various mutations of the Castskill Mountains and the grandness of the entire scenery highlight his genuine love of nature.

In "Rip Van Winkle," Irving's deep appreciation of the beauties of nature is underlined by his use of personification in the description of natural scenes and elements. In his depiction of the Catskill Mountains, for example, his use of this literary device is evident. He states that they are "a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river swelling up to a noble height and lording it over the surrounding country" (29). Here, the Catskill Mountains are compared to a tall

and wealthy person who seems to possess everything around him. They are also compared to a noble and dignified man who belongs to a well-known and highly esteemed family. When the weather is fine, these mountains "are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky" (29). Here also, the Catskill Mounains are attributed with human-like characteristics as they appear to be clothed and to have the ability to print their shapes on the sky. One of these mountains is also portrayed as having a "brow" (33) just like a human being. Irving's use of personification is further noticeable in his description of the Hudson as a "lordly" river, moving with its "majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands" (33). Irving's use of such words as lordly and majestic make the Hudson River appear as a handsome and impressive man who moves easily and gracefully. This river also seems to be clothed in blue and purple as it reflects the clouds, mountains and sky having these colours. Through his use of personification in the description of various natural elements in the story, Irving suggests that nature is not only beautiful but also important. He implicitly argues that human beings are not better or more valuable than the nonhuman natural environment which should be respected and protected rather than conquered and destroyed. He claims that humans are only members of nature without which they cannot live and exist. Thus, Irving's recurrent use of personification also underscores his deep love of nature.

5. Conclusion

The numerous similarities and resemblances between Irving and his fictional hero justify the claim that "Rip Van Winkle" might be considered as an autobiographical story in which the writer gives an account of his life and personality. They also give a reason for the assertion that Irving has an unmatchable ability to impersonate

himself in his writings and that the charm his books possess is a reflection of the charm of his character. In fact, many of Irving's virtues and qualities are perfectly illustrated through the character of Rip, who largely mirrors the writer's personality. For instance, the latter reflects Irving's generosity, the kindness of heart and unconditional sympathy with people. He also reflects some of Irving's defects such as his aversion to work and his inclination to idleness, especially during his early career as a writer. To a large extent, Irving uses Rip as a means of articulating his beliefs and attitudes towards various issues such as politics and the environment. For this reason, Rip might be considered as Irving's representative and spokesman in the tale. He might also be considered as another way through which Irving hides his identity in addition to the use of various pseudonyms such as Geoffrey Crayon and Diedrich Knickerbocker. Like these pseudonyms, Rip functions as a kind of protective barrier between the writer and the world. Through this protective barrier, Irving can express his opinion about sensitive and controversial issues, such as homosexuality, without endangering his public image. In fact, Irving's desire to maintain his privacy by describing his personal thoughts and beliefs within a narrative rather than a documentary framework might be explained by his deep sensitivity to rebuke and criticism from his readers and critics. Thus, the autobiographical dimension of "Rip Van Winkle" consists not only in Irving's adaptation of the story to his psychological and emotional needs but also in providing an account of his moral, intellectual and behavioural characteristics. Irving's use of the fictional sketch as an autobiographical framework might be considered as one of his greatest contributions to American literature. Through his style, he gave rise to a distinct literary genre and influenced many other writers such as Edgar Allan Poe.

NOTES

1. In his recent biography *Washington Irving: An American Original*, Brian Jay Jones claims that Irving learned little more than how to read and write at school. He suggests that Irving "was such a dismal student that one fellow classmate later remembered him as 'a sluggish and inapt scholar of great diffidence – what teachers call stupid'" (5). Jones also suggests that although Irving often caused trouble in the classroom, he was largely unpunished by his teacher Benjamin Romaine who was also characterized by a "similar good-natured, easy-going attitude" (5).
2. One of these reviewers is John Neal, a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Soon after the publication of *The Tales of a Traveller*, Neal attacked Irving by saying the following: "You, Geoffrey Crayon, have great power, original power. We rejoice in your failure now, because we believe that it will drive you into a style of original composition far more worthy of yourself. Go to work: lose no time. Your foundations will be stronger for this uproar. You cannot write a novel, a poem, a true tale, or a tragedy. You *can* write another 'Sketch-Book,' worth all that you have ever written, if you will draw out from yourself" (qtd. in Hill 1879, 96).
3. After giving up his subject to Prescott, Irving did not have another theme to work upon and his financial situation was precarious. Shortly after the publication of Prescott's work, Irving expressed this idea in a letter to his nephew by stating that "I doubt whether Mr Prescott was aware of the extent of the sacrifice I made. This was a favourite subject, which had delighted my imagination ever since I was a boy. I had brought home books from Spain to aid me in it and looked upon it as a pendant to my Columbus. When I gave it up to him, I in a manner gave him up my bread, for I depended upon the profit of it to recruit my waning finances. I had no other subject at hand to supply its place" (qtd. in P. Irving 2001, 143). However, Irving praised Prescott's work and claimed that it "does honour to himself and his country, and I wish him the full enjoyment of his laurels" (qtd. in P. Irving 2001, 144).
4. Irving's belovedness might be explained by other reasons in addition to his generosity and kind-heartedness. According to Romney, Irving was also admired for his charming personality, the gaiety of nature, brilliant conversational powers, modesty and contentment. For instance, Irving was so modest that he did not like to use his L. L. D. degree given to him by Oxford. Despite the success of his first books, likewise, he was far from being proud. "I feel almost appalled by such success," he said to his friends, "and fearful lest it cannot be real or is not merited, or that I shall not act up to the expectations that may be formed" (qtd. in Romney 1908, 26).
5. According to Jones, Irving might have engaged in his first homosexual

relationship with the American painter and poet Washington Allston while he was in Italy (50). Irving met Allston in the spring of 1805 in Rome and they immediately became close and intimate companions. The latter also seems to have a homosexual orientation which might be discerned through some of his paintings. Irving was so influenced by Allston that he even considered painting as a profession.

6. As Axson argues, Irving has detached himself from the furious political turmoils of the mid-nineteenth century also because "it was not in his nature to reverse the habit of a lifetime which had been to labour in his bland way to promote that which unites people rather than that which divides" (189). This was evident through many of the duties which he performed as a diplomat. For instance, he contributed to the amicable settlement of the Oregon boundary dispute and played a significant role in promoting good relations between America and other countries such as Spain, Great Britain, Germany and France. As a matter of fact, "[i]nternational rancors were mollified by the presence of Washington Irving" (Axson 1933, 189).

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A Number and *The Goat; or, 'Who Is Sylvia?'* (Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy). The Posthuman Dynamics in Dysfunctional Families

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Abstract. This paper aims to demonstrate the posthuman elements in *A Number* by Caryl Churchill and *The Goat* by Edward Albee concerning the familial relationships that emerge within these two contemporary plays. Churchill constructs the posthumanist dynamics in her work through the clone life forms that bear genetic similarities to the real children of the problematic father in the play, who is in search of total authority to abuse and violate the notion of family. While the first play emphasizes the hierarchical side of the posthuman relationships between man and clone, the second one deals with the role of animals, deconstructing the anthropocentric view. In *The Goat*, the unusual bond of the father with a goat is regarded as love by him, whereas it turns into some kind of a rivalry for his wife. The contrast between the father's attitude towards his gay son and his effort to justify his sexual relationship with the animal, problematizing the borders of rape, takes the posthuman relations to an extreme level. In this context, our study shows that the line between human and inhuman is blurred, and the social and familial values become questionable in the 21st century.

Keywords: posthumanism, Caryl Churchill, Edward Albee, family, identity, technology, crisis

1. Posthumanism in Culture

The 2000s, which saw major changes in human understanding and life practices due to the technological improvements and the related popular culture movements, transformed arts and literature through new types of questionings towards life and humanity. "In February

1997, Scottish scientists sparked worldwide controversy by announcing the birth of a lamb, Dolly – the first mammalian clone successfully created from an adult cell" ("Caryl Churchill" n.d., 1605). This new reproduction technology raised the interest in science and led some circles to interrogate science's limitations about human life together with other existing and possible inhuman organisms. These issues, at short notice, became the subjects of studies about posthumanism, which can be defined as "the acknowledgement and activation of the trace of the inhuman within the human" (Badmington 2004, 155). Focused on the inhuman forms developed by human-made technologies, posthumanism also encompasses animal studies, which indicate animals as significant life forms like humans. Demonstrated the inability of the nonhuman, in general, and animals, in particular, to speak for themselves within a long-standing anthropocentric world, posthumanism essentially leads to thinking beyond all of the dichotomies that create hierarchy and domination, including human and machine, human and animal, man and woman, or homosexual and heterosexual. In line with the desire of posthumanism studies to interpret humanity beyond the hierarchical order and based on morals, which make the core of the human, the dramatic arts that have been displaying the human condition since the beginning of its emergence began to question what humanity means in the 21st century.

2. Caryl Churchill and Edward Albee

Dramatist Caryl Churchill, who produced many works about identity in this age of technology, in her impressive play, *A Number*, which was staged for the first time in 2002, depicts a damaged family whose mother commits suicide and father loses himself by being an alcoholic and neglecting her son. The inconceivable attempt of the father, whose name is Salter, to let scientists create the clones of his son Bernard's, for the sake of recovering his lost relationship of

father and son, initiates the tragic rise of the play. Contemporary to Churchill, Edward Albee's play, *The Goat; or, Who Is Sylvia? (Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy),* which was also staged in 2002, conceptualizes the similar issue of inhuman within a family through a goat, instead of the clones. Martin, the father, falls in love with a goat, whom he named Sylvia, and this secret of him comes as a bombshell into his family, in which Stevie, the wife, goes nuts and Billy, their gay son, sinks into an identity crisis more than ever. Both of the plays merge the posthuman dynamics by placing the inhuman subjects, the clones and a goat, which blur the line between human and inhuman, with the dysfunctional families, which as a concept based on the chaotic and undesirable marriages at that time. These families portrayed a new type of gathering with full of stepparents, strangers and spoiled kids, or in other words, "[i]f the traditional family was dead, the new extended families developed in eye-watering complex ways, with a plethora of relationships" (Sierz 2011, 163). *A Number* and *The Goat* portray such inextricable families, which is actually the smallest unit of society to teach morals, the meaning of humanity and family to an individual in the first place, with a posthumanist perspective to demonstrate the violence of the human race, who tries to understand its own meaning by testing the limits of the notion of humanity and trying to conquer this notion, through inhuman forms which are silent and defenceless.

3. "A NUMBER"

The family, in *A Number*, which is made of a psychologically ill father, an absent mother, a neglected son and multiple clone sons, represents the query about the functions of each family member, all of whom turn away from nurturing into poisoning each other, just like the family does in *The Goat*. As Gobert says about the family concept in the play,

> *A Number* situates itself in a long tradition of domestic dramas that interrogate the family structure, whose role in identity construction is as fundamental as it is problematic… Identity hinges on a subject-position, and (…) we begin as sons and daughters. The twentieth century's most compelling articulations of subjectivity show that the subject originates in, and is reinforced by, its difference from others. Thus, the family proves crucial, since the 'I' that anchors the subject is produced early. (Gobert 2009, 106)

Such a crucial element in the construction of identity, as Gobert indicates, the family, in *A Number*, is in the strongest sense harmed by the father figure, who is traditionally expected to lead his family to the right path. However, within the play, the only path Salter leads, both himself and his family, is the road to collapsing values. Salter, the problematic father, by producing the idea that he should have the clones of his son Bernard to control the father and son relationship, in which he failed at first, initiates the fact that he completely misunderstands fatherhood. "[Salter] is concerned with 'doing' rather than 'being' a father, with his practice as a father rather than with his status as father" (Griffin 2012, 15), which means he perceives his familial existence and bond as the palpable and exchangeable properties. He believes his sons, much the same as he thinks about any family member, belong to him, and if he makes mistakes with raising a child, he can easily replace the first one with other genetically identical sons until he proves he is an accurate father. Therefore, his plan of cloning appears solely as a symbol to imply his mentality of possession within the supposedly sacred family. As it is revealed within a conversation of Salter with B2, the clone son, he calls the clones "copies" and "things" (Churchill 2002, 10). Moreover, he estimates the price of his clone son, whom Salter permits to be created with the purpose of repairing his fatherhood. He says to him, "I think it's more like half a million each person because what they've done, they've damaged your uniqueness, weakened your identity" (Churchill 2002, 11). Much the same with his dare to price an inhuman life form looking like his son, that Salter has no right to subordinate, his words about killing B1 if he wants to display the inhumanity within him which emerges as a result of his mentality of domination. To B1, he says,

> I could have killed you and had another son, made one the same like I did or start again have a different one get married again and I didn't, I spared you though you were this disgusting thing by then anyone in their right mind would have squashed you but I remembered what you'd been like at the beginning and I spared you… (Churchill 2002, 24)

Inwardly, he regards being a father as grace in the same vein as being an ethical human. Salter's opinions about fatherhood are inseparable from his thoughts about the inhuman forms, which prioritize the hierarchy and domination, and justifies the possible violent act.

The unnamed and non-existent mother, in *A Number*, contributes to reflect the violence within a human in a silent manner, as opposed to constantly speaking father. Although the mother's story is not fully known, her suicide and some hints in the words of her son B1 imply that her motherhood, together with her humanity, are subject to decay. The utmost violence she does within the play is to herself by taking the life of a human being, even if this is her own life. Besides, as pointed out, "Salter's wife, the play makes clear through B1's bitter observations, was not a good mother. B1 simply remembers her inadequacy at protecting him from his father" (Griffin 2012, 16). By deciding her own absence, both as a human in textual space and as a mother in familial space, she silently harms her family relations and the humane respect of letting someone live.

The son, Bernard, of this highly technologized and much the same disjoined family, as a consequence of lacked family connections cannot fulfil a humanely constructed subjectivity. Abandoned by his mother physically and by his father mentally, B1's process towards an identity inevitably turns into a crisis especially after his identical brothers take part in the family, which is an offending concept by nature for Bernard. Years later when he returns to his father from the clinic, where he receives mental treatment, B1 comes face to face with his father's continuing mistake. Salter, who believes that raising a kid necessitates possessing him, maintains the same perceptive by trying to own the father and son relationship through the clones, that Salter thinks he has a right to lead, violate or abuse until they fit the scheme inside Salter's head. Worse, he cannot see that he not

only misunderstands the concept of humanity but also the meaning of having a son, as he confesses to his son Bernard,

> Nobody regrets more than me the completely unforeseen unforeseeable which isn't my fault and does make it more upsetting but what I did seem at the time the only and also it's a tribute, I could have had a different one, a new child altogether that's what most people but I wanted you again because I thought you were the best. (Churchill 2002, 17)

As Salter reduces the meaning of being human and the function of a family into a genetic commodity, which he can value and devalue, B1 diminishes the morals within him completely by killing B2, which functions as a scapegoat to display how cruel and corrupted the human race can be. Between the B1 and B2 emerges a familial rivalry, that is likened with "Cain and Abel, or Jacob and Esau" ("Caryl Churchill" n.d., 1608). By being very similar with the brotherly enmity in the oldest myths, the hatred within B1 essentially indicates the history of violence to the notion of other, that is produced in the human mind after apprehending the distinction of 'I' and 'you' early in the family.

Unlike the degenerate and dysfunctioning family of Salter, the other family of one of the sons of Salter, Michael's family, is demonstrated as the only accurately functioning family in *A Number*, despite the fact that a clone is the father of this family. Salter's obsession with genes, which he sees as the most significant aspect of humanity, is proved utterly irrelevant in the process of being a human along with being a father with the intense example of Michael. Through the end of the play, when Salter meets his clone son Michael, he sees that Michael is seemingly a healthy adult with three children and a normal marriage, as a portrayal of a basic nuclear family. On the contrary to Salter both in mentality and relatedly in the father role, Michael does not give the highest importance to genetics and does not accept blood tie as the sole determinant. He says,

> We've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a chimpanzee. We've got thirty per cent the same

> as a lettuce. Does that cheer you up at all? I love the lettuce. It makes me feel I belong. (Churchill 2002, 28)

In the character of Michael, Caryl Churchill, impressively re-conceptualizes humanity. As he clarifies, as human beings, we are part of a larger family with other species, whom we have no right to dominate. The other life forms' inability to speak, when compared to the human beings, does not add up to the idea that the human race is superior. Through caring for their right to live as freely as we live is the key to humane behaviour. That's why Michael has as a clone.

4. *THE GOAT; OR, 'WHO IS SYLVIA?'* (NOTES TOWARD A DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY)

The search for humanity within the tool of family, which is the first unit a human being, steps in to grow and be edified, in *The Goat; or, Who Is Sylvia? (Notes Toward a Definition of Tragedy)* is as fundamental as in *A Number*. The playwright of *The Goat*, Edward Albee, whose "vision was not absurdism nor any species of philosophical nihilism, but the result of a commitment to values he saw neglected or ignored" (McCarthy 1987, 8), renders the chaos of society with strikingly mad symbolism. The fictional family that Albee creates in the play becomes "an indictment of the hypocrisies inherent in the current rhetoric of family values" (Edward Albee n.d., 1564-1565). Each member of the family goes under a crisis which displays the battle with humanity inside them in different ways. Martin, the father, by cheating on his wife with a goat, puts the questions into both the limitations of humanity and the dynamics of the conjugal community along with the fatherhood. Sinks into the sense of emptiness in his being, Martin attempts to fill the gaps within by using an animal and deceiving himself with the idea that what he does is in the name of love. Though he rises as the only person who is the closest to see beyond anthropocentric perspective among his family, he still fails to grasp the difference between companionship

and abuse about the subject of inhuman livings. Martin equalizes the goat with himself by his words, which he says, "[t]he subject is a goat; the subject is Sylvia" and "I thought we all were… animals" (Albee 2002, 49). He balances the subjectivity of both himself and the goat in his statements, yet, in fact, he tries to justify his act of rape to the goat. The silence of the goat reveals the violent urge, to be camouflaged by the excuse of love, within Martin. The justification desire of immoral tendency of Martin unfolds, even more, when he tells the story of a man who is seduced by his own babysitting on his lap. After narrating the incident to his family, he adds, "things happen" and he continues with a question that, "is there anything anyone doesn't get off on, whether we admit it or not – whether we know it or not?" (Albee 2002, 52). His indication of the common instinct and compulsion, such as survival and reproduction, within the human and animal beings, for the fact that human is the animal kind in origins, implies the point Martin skips, similar with Salter in *A Number*. He does not comprehend how impactful can be the behaviours of humans towards other humans or kinds to determine the humanity within. His understanding of the inhuman life is not completed without questioning himself about whether he has a right to violate the goat he thinks he cherishes so much. Besides, he does not show enough respect even to the ones, his wife and son, who have been living together with him for years. When he describes what his wife means to him, he begins to his words by glorifications such as the 'love of my life' and 'my playmate', yet he finalizes by saying to her "my cook, my bottlewasher" (Albee 2002, 68). Gradually, Martin reduces her into a machine he can use as long as it functions. In the same vein, when he gets uncontrollably angry, he brings out the inner thoughts about his gay son with such harsh words as, "fucking faggot!" (Albee 2002, 81). The confusion about the limits of humanity in Martin fuses with his loss of realization about the meaning of family and the essence of human relations. He wastes not only his humanity by physically harming an inhuman being, but also his familial bonds by psychological destruction. In the end, as he confesses, Martin

becomes "diminished" (Albee 2002, 90) as a father, husband and human.

The member of the family who gets the most affected by the chaos Martin creates and the one who seems to depend on the hierarchical order mentality, between the human and inhuman or man and woman, in the strongest sense is demonstrated as Stevie, the wife of Martin. After the shock of the betrayal, in which her pride of womanhood is damaged, she experiences the more unsettling trauma, that transgresses the marriage problem, with the fact that she is cheated by her husband for a goat. For such a woman as Stevie, who is willing to sacrifice the rights of her own gender for making her husband satisfied, the identity crisis arouses in both her femininity and humanity. As remarked,

> Stevie, who has been defined so far by and within Martin's gaze and desire, confesses to have been happy within this objectifying position. As she states, she has followed her mother's advice and has fallen in love carefully marrying accordingly the one man she has ever wanted. (Rád 2009, 140)

She is a woman who proudly exhibits the servant role by disregarding her own female rights to reject to do things that put her into the position of a slave of the family and restrict her freedom to do things in life that make her happy. She seems grateful for being the cook of her family, compatible wife to her husband, and caring mother of her son, in other words, to turn into a woman for everyone else but herself. However, same with Salter in *A Number*, Stevie is concerned with doing rather than being. Her blind devotion to the roles she does perform for her family and to fit in the description of her mother about womanhood is deeply shaken with the intervention of Sylvia since she never questioned the nature of her existence and the function of the notion of "family" before. As it is implied at the beginning of the play with her words, "Who am I? Who am I?" (Albee 2002, 68), the whole play is processed as an interrogation for her. She strongly relies on the belief that love is specific to humankind and the human race is indisputably superior to animal kind since she can say without thinking that, "[h]ow can

you love me when you love so much less?" and "[y]ou have brought me down to nothing!" (Albee 2002, 82) to Martin about Sylvia. In fact, she deep down knows the reality about human nature, which she claims to be a higher level of life form than the animals. In an attempt to compare herself with the goat as she says, "[b]ut I'm a human being; I have only two breasts; I walk upright; I give milk only on special occasions; I use the toilet. You love me? I don't understand" (Albee 2002, 82). Stevie, at the bottom, elucidates the common nature of human with inhuman. Nevertheless, her depraved subjectivity, which is constructed with inaccurate principles about humanity, femininity and family, is proved with her violence within, exposed by killing the goat.

The last member of the family, Billy the son, who already has been in a query about his identity, doubles the questioning process with the means of humanity related to his father's acts. Albee's characterization of Billy, which is likened with the majority of children characterization of his works as "either deeply troubled or highly idealized" (Edward Albee n.d., 1564), reflects the contemporary dysfunctional family concept and its effects upon the kids of these families, who are about to become self-aware individuals to participate in larger communities later in life. The homosexual preferences of Billy, which are not acceptable for some people, and the coming-of-age period he has been undergoing in such an indifferent family even before the starting point of the play put him into a cycle without an outcome. As if everyday activities, he narrates his struggle caused by his distorted family as,

> I will probably go to my room, and I'll probably close my door, and I'll probably lie down on my bed, and I'll probably start crying and it'll probably get louder and worse, but you probably won't hear it – either of you – because you'll be too busy killing each other. But I'll be there, and my little eight-year-old heart will for certain be breaking – in twain, as they say. (Albee 2002, 83)

In addition to the detrimental routine Billy has due to his family, the calling of Martin of him as faggot or Martin's obvious incomprehension of Billy's sexual choices when he says to his son,

"[y]ou know, your own sex life leaves a little to" (Albee 2002, 81), make the construction of the sense of self and family harder for Billy. Though he seems to be the only person in the family who does not attempt to violate any life form physically, his biased thoughts towards the animal life is very similar to his mother's. Billy's identity crisis, dysfunctional family and lack of cognizance about the value of any life, without discriminating the species, evoke the portrayal of B1 in *A Number* and signal the possibility that Billy may be in an incubation period to reveal the violence in the future like Bernard.

5. Conclusion

Both contemporary plays, *A Number* and *The Goat; or, Who Is Sylvia? (Notes Toward a Definition of Tragedy),* lead the reader to question everything he or she knows about being a human, claiming his or her existence on this earth with the awareness towards all livings and belonging to a family. Testing their values and beliefs after inhuman forms, clones, in *A Number*, and *the goat,* join their family. Both members of Salter's and Martin's families reveal the inner violence in different ways and reflect their intolerance to the act of blurring the lines between human and inhuman. Clones and the goat disturb the anthropocentric perspective by showing the families how imperfect they are. Once the decadence of human families is clarified and the forgotten fact about the larger family the human race belongs to, together with all kinds of living, is demonstrated, the verbal and physical violence within the characters towards inhumans become more visible. All human characters represent their ruthlessness and desire to conquer in one way or another. As portrayed in literary history, human, whose intention to dominate is everlasting, has always found a way to create binaries such as man versus God, man versus nature or man versus society. The 'versus' mentality is so strong in the human race that, instead of dissolving in a seemingly civilized and improved society, it turns now into the dichotomy "man versus humanity". Leading humankind to self-

destruction, the notion "versus", which is excellently exposed in these plays, essentially brings forth the need of a 'and' mentality, as Michael in *A Number* accurately embraces. The only solution which both *A Number* and *The Goat* try to show is to accept human and inhuman together as the only basic family.

Conclusion

The Other's silence in the examined Coetzee's select novels is more than being just a mere renunciation of agency. Rather, it is adopted as a strategy of resistance to escape the authoritative and hegemonic process of subjectification that tends to thematize and interpret the Other's agency according to its epistemological framework. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Other's story is hardly told by speech as much as by silence. The barbarian girl's systematic recourse to silence occludes the Empire's representatives' attempts at deciphering her. In *Foe*, the possibility that only Friday's tongue can tell his story reveals that the Other in Coetzee's fiction remains impenetrable and incommensurable. However, it is only in *Age of Iron* that silence acquires ethical empowerment that leads Mrs Curren to question her belonging to the South African oligarchy and to disavow the colonial language of apartheid, which fails to establish an authentic and constructive dialogue between different cultures and races. In the above-studied texts, Coetzee orchestrates silence as a modality of subversion and resistance that potentially enables the oppressed figures of otherness to perpetuate and defend their autonomy and difference against the totalizing and homogenizing discourse of the Self.

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FEMALE CARNALITY FROM "A MALE EYE": GOTHICIZING THE FEMALE DESIRE IN FAULKNER'S "AS I LAY DYING" AND "A ROSE FOR EMILY"

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Abstract. The issues of gender and sexuality in William Faulkner's fiction have provided a fertile ground for debate. Faulkner's women have perplexed and intrigued scholars and critics, who invested their energy in deciphering his attitudes towards gender and women. While some scholars accuse Faulkner of misogyny and sexism, others perceive his inscription of the female desire in his texts as a challenge to the "Law of the Father" and to the discourse of patriarchy, which silences the female desire and relegates the female carnality to taboo. Focusing on "As I Lay Dying" (1930) and "A Rose for Emily" (1930), two-Faulknerian women-centred narratives that tell their protagonists' bodies' stories from the male author's "eye", and adopting a gothic perspective, this paper attempts to show that Faulkner's Gothicized inscription of the female body is neither empowering nor liberating. Rather, it betrays his masculine concerns about female sexuality, as well as his patriarchal Southern society's fear of the liberation of her body.

Keywords: gender, sexuality, carnality, gothic

INTRODUCTION

The inscription of the female body into the text owes credit to eighteenth-century Gothic fiction[1]. Marked by transgression, excess and relying on the supernatural, Gothic fiction brought the issues of female sexuality and carnality from the repressed to the expressed, from the taboo to the debatable. Nevertheless, such inscription is often "affirmative", as the rebellious fleeing heroine reconciles herself to her society by marrying her "male saviour who rescues

her" from other male dangers. The real shift has come almost two centuries later with the *avant-garde* modernist and postmodernist fiction: a fiction of "bliss" - in Roland Barthes' terms - which cancels happy endings and resists closure. This fiction often imposes on its reader "a state of loss" (98) since it "discomforts […] [and] unsettles the readers' historical, cultural psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories brings to crisis his relation to language" (98). Typically, modernist texts, "As I Lay Dying" and "A Rose for Emily" tackle the theme of female carnality, which is Gothicised since both female protagonists are represented as monstrous creatures, "demons in the house", who are dangerously sexual and who instigate destruction to avenge their abused and oppressed sexuality. Though Faulkner deviates from the normative conception of femininity as passive, conquered and helpless and inscribes a new version of femininity, which is disruptive, destructive and vengeful, his narratives fail to repress his masculine fear of female sexuality.

GOTHICISING THE FEMALE BODY IN "AS I LAY DYING"

"As I Lay Dying" (1930) is a story of fifty-nine chapters narrated by multiple narrators namely, the Bundrens and their acquaintances. It tells the story of the Southern unfortunate Bundrens who set for a journey from the Mississippi to their dead mother's hometown, Jefferson, so they can bury her there as she has already wished before she passed away. The events of the novel revolve around Addie Bundren, who dies at the very outset. Yet, Addie is present while absent. In this narrative, Faulkner does not only grant Addie presence in the absence but also makes Addie's body the main point around which the events of the story evolve. Faulkner even allows Addie's body to speak and to tell its story of oppression and revolt while alive and revenge while dead. This abused body, however, turns out to be the direct cause for all the misfortunes that befall on the Bundrens.

The novel opens with a very gloomy scene. On a hot day of July, Cash Addie Bundren's eldest son is building a coffin for his agonizing mother who lies dying indoors while others are "sitting there". Like Buzzards waiting, fanning themselves" (14). Addie could see her coffin as she raises her head and looks through the window of her dark room. Readers feel sympathy for the dying mother who is surrounded by a callous household. The loud noise produced by Cash's carpentering "Chuck Chuck Chuck" (8; emphasis in original) creates a gothic effect in the novel. "[E]very breath [Addie] takes is full of knocking and sawing" (14). Yet, Faulkner intervenes via his female narrator, Cora, (Addie's neighbour) and tells us that Addie Bundren is not going to die "a Christian death" (19) since "the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her (11).

As the narrative progresses, this sympathy is further undermined. Readers are led to believe that Addie deserves this tragic end. Addie is presented as a stone-hearted woman "with any natural affection" (18) and "loving nobody" (18), even her own children. Blamed for his misconduct by his brother Jewel, Darl, Addie's second eldest son shocks us when he affirms "I cannot love my mother because I have no mother" (60). The monstrosity of Addie is further consolidated by the animal imagery which is used by her own kids to depict her. Unable to handle his mother's death Vardaman the protagonist's younger child asserts "my mother is a fish" (64) and Darl mocks his illegitimate brother's love for his mother "Jewel's mother is a horse" (60). Simply, "[Addie] was not a true mother" (107). Her kids, she informs us are nothing but her duty to her husband. Addie is an orphaned school teacher from town who tells us little about her family and childhood. Addie dies in chapter twelve but she talks to us in chapter forty from her coffin to reveal her secret.

Addie informs us that she hates her father alluding to her problematic relationship with her patriarchal society. Addie marries the farmer, Anse Bundren, to find out later that she has tricked herself with words namely, love; "the same word that had tricked Anse too" (108). Marriage has made Addie realize that the word

"Love […] was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack" (106). Addie feels resentful because Anse has dispossessed her of her body. Indeed, Addie's frustration and bitterness are not caused by Anse's infiltration into her body and its shift from a virgin from the shape of a […] [into] an inversion" (107), but rather from its failure to satisfy her sexual drives. Addie tells us that living with Anse is like living with the dead because for her "Anse is dead" (107). When she lays by him in the dark, she would hear the land she would not feel her body, her "blood and flesh" (107). To appease her pains Addie seeks fusion with nature. After class, instead of going home "she would go down the hill" (105). What is striking is that what attracts Addie to nature is not its bright side but rather its dark one. Projecting her decaying sexual life on nature, Addie prefers visiting the mountains in "the early spring for of it [is] worst" (105). In that part of the season she could enjoy scenting "the quiet smell of damp and rotten leaves" (105).

The "postponement of sexual satisfaction" (Freud 6) has nurtured Addie's death instinct. Addie becomes death-obsessed and grows sadistic. Turning out pain from "the ego to the object" (Freud 44), Addie seeks excitation and pleasure through inflicting pain on others. This "sadistic instinct whose aim is to injure the object is driven from Eros" (48). However, "the act of obtaining erotic mastery over an object coincides with the object's destruction" (48). Addie enjoys beating not only her kids but also her students because it is through beating that she can realize herself as a human being and as a female. Addie confesses:

> When the switch fell, I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran; and I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my own forever and ever (Faulkner 105).

According to Julia Kristeva, motherhood can be "a cure" for oppressed femininity. Motherhood can transform the relationship into another (the embryo) into love and hence it can reduce the female estrangement in the oppressive phallic culture. (84-86 *Hatred*

and Forgiveness). But to our surprise, motherhood for Addie Bundren is more horrible than her marriage to Anse. For her, pregnancy and motherhood have violated her 'aloneness' more than Anse himself. Addie could handle the violation at first when she gave birth to Cash but when she had her second child Darl she felt so bitter to the point that she thought "[she] would kill Anse. But she did not because it was pointless; for her "he died" a long time before (108). To avenge herself, Addie asks Anse to bury her in Jefferson roughly forty miles away when she dies. She also resorts to sin.

Refusing to be the mute "eternal feminine" of the oppressive patriarchy, not only does Addie Bundren refute to be the good mother who incarnates sacrifice and self-effacement but also opts for being a sinner. Defying her rough Southern society and thwarting the matriarchal roles expected from her as a good Christian female, Addie starts a love affair with the local minister Whitefield and conceives a child, Jewel, the only character to whom she holds some affection. Though Addie gains some sympathy when she draws our attention to religious bigotry referring to reverend Whitefield as "the instrument ordained by who created the sin, to sanctify that sin He has created" (108), she does arouse the reader's repulsion when she admits that she would lay with Anse afterwards.

Gothicising the Female body in "A Rose for Emily"

Faulkner's first published story, "A Rose for Emily", (1930) is a gothic story with a very romantic title that tells the tragic tale of Emily Grierson's enforced loneliness and gloomy life with the corpse of the man who broke her heart and expectations. Emily's story, though so tragic, parallels Emily's passage from a victimized into a victimizer; from an oppressed female into an oppressor.

From the outset, a sense of mystery hovers over the whole narrative. The novel opens with the news of Miss Grierson's death. Mrs Grierson is introduced as a very revered woman whom the

town's people consider "a tradition, a duty and a care" (1). She is also a private and mysterious woman whose death arouses in men's hearts "a sort of affection for a fallen monument" (1) and evokes women's curiosity about "the inside of her house" (1). The third-person narrator indulges in a detailed description of Emily's mansion. Reminiscent of Edgar Allan's Poe's Usher's house, Emily's house is a putrefying dust-smelling mansion that may reflect the decay of its household, particularly, Emily's psychological decay. The narrative moves back in time and returns to Emily's life and family's history. Emily, we are told, is a victim of her oppressive and possessive aristocratic father. As the narrative progresses, readers' curiosity for details about Emily's house and life goes intense.

Though the narrative does not hint at incest, readers remain uncomfortable with the father-daughter relationship in this story. Emily's father is a stubborn aristocrat who has refused all the suitors who proposed to his daughter. He used to scare them away with a horsewhip because "none of the young men was good enough for Miss Emily" (4). Like her aunt who remained unwed and who lost her wits, Emily is condemned to lead a life of seclusion and loneliness after her father's death. She is depicted as an impervious woman who has no human relationships. Even when curious relatives tried to invade her privacy, they were not received. A few weeks after, Homer Barron, a northern day worker would appear in Emily's life. People expected the couple to get married since Emily seemed glad to give up her nobility for love. Yet, Homer vanquished a short while after Emily visited the drug store to get some poison. Emily locked herself inside. The only one who used to be seen "going in and out" (3) with "a market basket" (3) was her young Negro servant. A nasty smell coming out from her house has made the neighbour ask the mayor's help. People went to her house by night stealthily and scouted the garden sniffing across the lawn without finding anything. "Within a week or two, the smell went away." (4).

It is only after her death that the horrible secret of Mrs Grierson's nasty smelling house has been revealed. Emily, we find out, is living

with Homer Barron's corpse. People get in her house and break into her secret upstairs chamber. Reminiscent of Dickens' Miss Havisham's, it is a decaying macabre bridal room. The whole scene is uncannily Gothic. The colour of the rose curtain is faded, the man's silver toilet staff is tarnished, the groom's collar and tie are laid as if "they [have] been just removed" (9). "The man himself lay in bed" (9). His decaying body was inextricable from the rotten bed. What is dismaying is that the body "was laid in an attitude of an embrace" (9), while the adjacent pillow had "the indentation of a head" (9) upon which there was "a long stand of iron-grey head" (9). It turns out that Emily has poisoned Homer to lay with his rotten body. Readers cannot but feel repulsive to Miss Emily's death-obsessed carnality. Though Emily's is a tragic figure of patriarchal oppression whose killing of Homer is nothing but an assertive revolt against male abuse, her animalistic seeking of "jouissance" in death strips her of her humanity.

Conclusion

Though Faulkner empowers Addie Bundren and Emily Grierson by allowing them to casts their rage on their abusers, his representation of female sexuality, in "As I lay Dying" and "A Rose for Emily", as animalistic, promiscuous and abject reflects his fear from female carnality rather than his sympathy for women. Female sexuality in both narratives is not creative but rather destructive. It is death-obsessed sexuality whose Eros is undermined by its Thanatos. Indeed, both narratives betray their writer's "fear and loathing" of female carnality. Unlike "As I Lay Dying", which presents its female heroine as a monstrous woman, "A Rose for Emily" does not demonize its protagonist and attempts to arouse the reader's empathy and respect, implying that Emily is a revered lady who is a victim of the declining aristocracy. However, the abjection and shock brought by its story's end surpass those evoked by Addie's story of sin and promiscuity. Both women are silenced until their

death. It is death that demystifies Addie Bundren and Emily Grierson abject sexuality. Allowing Addie Bundren to speak from her coffin and revealing Emily's true sexual nature, by the end of her story Faulkner is alluding to the threatening reality that lies behind the patriarchal silencing of female desire. His vilification of Addie and Emily reflects what Simone de Beauvoir calls "the male dread of women, especially the infantile dread of maternal autonomy" (Gilbert and Gubar, 34). This autonomy unsettles male masculinity and challenges the hegemony of "the Law of the Father".

NOTES

1. In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), the American feminist and cultural theorist Elaine Showalter argues that though it is not quite possible to find out when women started writing since they tended to publish their works pseudonymously, the 1750s has witnessed the females' joining of the literary market place (16-17). Showalter asserts that the eighteenth-century women fiction of Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeve and Charlotte Brontë and their contemporaries can be seen as the earliest subtle form of female self-expression that inscribes women's experience of their bodies in the text.

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Power Relations and the Inevitable: The Cinema of Miklós Jancsó from a Foucauldian Perspective

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the concepts of power relations, identity, and personality in the cinema of Miklós Jancsó. Even though I take the film My Way Home (1965) as the object study, I point out that the analysis can be applied to the rest of his filmography, since it consists of a recurrent study of similar narrative patterns and topics. To achieve this goal and offer a better understanding of the philosophy behind the cinema of the Hungarian director, I approach the study from a Foucaultian perspective, from which I find a set of relevant similarities and differences between the political visions of both authors. I conclude that how power relations are represented in Jancsó's films lead to the idea of the inevitable, in which characters are not in control of their fate.

Keywords: Miklós Jancsó, Michel Foucault, power relations, Hungarian cinema, structuralism, identity

In one of the first scenes of *My Way Home* (*Így jöttem*, 1965), Miklós Jancsó filmed a series of interactions between individuals from different sides at the end of the Second World War in Germany. The protagonist is Jóska (András Kozák), a young Hungarian who tries to go back home, but is caught by a group of Soviet deserters. Suddenly, a group of military men who were trying to stop those deserters catch them all and take them to the place where they are holding a group of captive war prisoners. All of them will soon be executed. However, just before this is going to happen, Jóska saves

his life because he is Hungarian. The leader of the military group spares his life and tells him to go back home. At the same time, one of the deserters starts speaking in Hungarian, showing that he also belongs to that nationality, and hence, he deserves to live, too. This person with an unknown name is not that lucky and is executed, along with the rest of deserters.

In another scene, later in the film, the protagonist meets a group of Hungarians who are hiding from the military, trying to go back home. When they start talking, they tell him to join and return, but he refuses, because he feels comfortable in his new situation — he has established a friendship with a Soviet soldier who, in the beginning, was his captor. When the group discovers what is happening, they start pushing him to go back to his previous identity — him as an average Hungarian, a situation which necessarily means understanding the Soviets as the enemy, until his friend arrives to protect him. These two scenes not only expose the way Miklós Jancsó understood power relations and identity but the similarities and differences with Michel Foucault's approach to those topics.

Both authors think of power as something that can only exist through social dynamics of interaction. It is applied because it is possible to do so, and because it is what defines interaction as such, not because of the wickedness of the ones in power. Also, power is something that escapes any type of control, allowing a switch from oppressor to oppressed. However, Michel Foucault claims that there can be no power relation where there is no freedom from the side of the oppressed. Therefore, according to the description of the first scene, Jancsó and Foucault would strongly differ at this point. Regarding the identity of the individual, there is a sense of individuality as a form of oppression, since it makes the individual isolated, but at the same time deprived of a true personality, since identity is built up from the system of rules and social norms, which at the same time are defined by the power relations. As a result, achieving an actual, true personality would become a form of resistance towards power. In this essay, I claim that there is a close connection between Miklós Jancsó's cinema and Michel Foucault's

philosophy regarding power relations and identity and that the vision the director offers of life is pessimistic, since there is a feeling of the inevitability of fate that conditions the lives of protagonists.

Power Relations

Michel Foucault is straightforward when it comes to defining power. As it can be found in his text *The Subject and Power*, he claims that "there is no such entity as power, with or without a capital letter; global, massive or diffused; concentrated or distributed. Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action". But it is also important to have in mind that power does not appear as direct action on others — for example, physical force applied on the other's body — but as an action that affects the other's action/s (1997-2001, 340). At the same time, the author claims that "power is exercised only over free subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behaviour are available". As he points out afterwards, if we consider this approach, then the exercise of power cannot exist in relations to slavery or, in other words, freedom needs to exist in order to make the use of power possible (1997-2001, 342). This is the reason why resistance is possible and necessary: we would not want to become slaves, but we do react by resisting the effect of power and, by doing that, we actually make power possible. In summary, power appears in human relations as a dynamic entity that needs the presence of freedom and resistance to existing.

When we analyze the way Miklós Jancsó reflects on the use of power, there are important similarities but also significant differences. If we take the two scene samples exposed in the introduction, we can see two types of use of power. The first one would be that in which freedom is erased. From Jancsó's perspective, when soldiers take enemies as prisoners, they are using power against them, up to the point of erasing freedom, but this

does not prevent the appearance and survival of power relations; on the contrary, they are more present than ever. But this is not the only case when power relations appear. Analyzing the second scene, a type of situation very similar to what Foucault describes appears. There is a group of people in power, who oppresses the protagonist. Even though the oppressors become violent towards him, he is still free to choose and he decides to resist this pressure that comes from them. So, by resisting, he allows power relations to establish: they take actions to affect the other's actions. We could, thus, conclude that from Jancsó's perspective, life is just a matter of power relations, which are present all the time.

This coincides with the analysis developed by Lorant Czigany in his text *Jancsó Country: Miklós Jancsó and the Hungarian New Cinema*. The author exposes that the cinema of this director is a reflection of power relations. When talking about the beginning of *Silence and Cry* (*Csend és kiáltás*, 1967), Czigany describes the opening scene in these terms: "[t]he killing, and it is a killing, not an execution or a murder, is a completely casual, bloodless, and emotionless business. A basic human relationship is established: the man with the gun has the power, the victim accepts it. Death is a result of a move." (1972, 47). Another important point stressed in the article is the way characters relate to each other, with special regard to ones in power. The result of the communication is never a dialogue, but a command: the ones in power communicate by giving orders to the oppressed, not only the captors to the prisoners, but also the higher rank soldiers to the lower rank ones (1972, 48). Having this in mind, it is understandable that Jancsó always chose to direct historical films during periods of war or revolts because, in those situations, the exercise of power is more intense than ever. In those contexts, he can expand his idea of power relations as part of nature, something accepted by both the oppressors and the oppressed.

Again, taking *My Way Home* as a reference, an interesting contrast appears. In the central part of the film, the protagonist establishes a friendship relation with a Soviet soldier. In the beginning, they were supposed to be enemies but a series of situations provoke each of

them starts taking care of the other, discovering that, in fact, they understand each other at a human level. Here, the interpretation could be that, despite roles, identities and norms of behaviour, two apparent enemies who cannot speak the same language can establish a real connection, where the interaction is not based on power relations and communication is not based on commands. But, in the end, having this type of life means self-isolation because this horizontal way of relating is not accepted in society, neither by the oppressors nor by the oppressed.

In the end, we could conclude that, from Jancsó's perspective, and as Foucault claimed, power does not exist as an entity but is exercised through power relations. At the same time, the Hungarian author does not agree with the French philosopher when exposing that power can be exercised in deprivation of freedom, up to the point of proposing this situation as the purest form of power relation. Even though there are attempts to establish another type of human interaction, as it was exposed in *My Way Home*, the pessimistic vision of Jancsó exposes the impossibility of getting rid of power relations and all their painful consequences.

The Individual and Power

When it comes to the way an individual is affected by power relations, we could conclude that what is understood as personality is something created and modulated by this power. Foucault expressed that "[t]his form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects" (1997-2001, 331). Later in the same text, the French philosopher affirms that the modern state is "a very sophisticated structure in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific

patterns" (1997-2001, 334). In that sense, individuality exists, but it becomes a form of subjecting people, modelling their behaviours and attitudes based on power relations with other individuals, up to the point that actual individuality, understood as a genuine personality, does not exist as such in this matrix of influences which is the system of power relations that forms the modern State.

This pattern of individualization can be seen in Jancsó's films through the use of metaphorical or literal uniforms. If we take Foucault's perspective, we can understand nationality as some sort of totalizing individuality, which forms, at the same time, the individual and the collective. In his films, power relations appear due to this concept — nationality can be exchanged for ideology and it would work the same way— and affect the actions of the individuals. When it comes to relations between the captors and captives, nationality is the source for that. In other words, being an ally or an enemy is a matter of nationality. This not only explains the conflicts between different nationalities but inside the actual nationalities as well. The same way the Soviet deserters take the protagonist as a prisoner because he does not belong to their group, he is later freed from being executed precisely because he is not a Soviet soldier.

It is crucial to understand that power relations are also imposed inside a group of people belonging to the same nationality because it is the most important aspect Jancsó wanted to reflect on in *My Way Home*. Here it is fundamental to add the idea of the traitor of the consensus, a concept used by scholar Tibor Hirsch and used in his lectures about Miklós Jancsó (2020). This term is used to explain the conflict that arises when a character does not want to follow the ideological set of the environment in which he lives. In other words, it is the effect of power relations over the protagonist, who suffers the actions that others do in order to try to modify his actions, in an attempt to make him follow the set of rules and patterns that define individuality, as expressed previously regarding Foucault's thoughts. The protagonist questions the hegemonic ideology and, as a result, wants to live his life the way he considers appropriate, in an attempt

to reach a genuine personality, with genuine values and thoughts. This means stepping out of the system built up by the modern State. The individuals are part of this State, and their actions are controlled or modified by it — concretely, by power relations. At the same time, their actions modify others' actions, so they assure the survival of the system. In this sense, even the oppressed — the group of Hungarian prisoners who are trying to escape and ask the protagonist to join them — can become the oppressors — they force him to join and reject his attitude of being friends with the enemy and not following the social norms.

The attitude of the protagonist can, thus, be understood as a form of resistance. At the beginning of his text, Michel Foucault exposed the different types of forms of resistance, and, in the end, concludes that they are a form of confronting the ideology imposed by the state, which does not respect genuine individuality and forces individuals into concrete, pre-established patterns of behaviour and thought (1997-2001, 331). These ideas describe the attitude of Jóska, who establishes a new way of life along with his Soviet friend. They live self-isolated from both sides, developing a horizontal way of communication, where power relations do not exist. In the rest of the contexts, both when talking with comrades and enemies, the form of communication was that of the command. Here, there is actual understanding, mutual respect and openness towards the other's decisions and actions. It is, in other words, something like an oasis in the middle of the war.

Even though this idyllic situation takes place, Jancsó is pessimistic about it. It can indeed take place, but it is also true that it is possible because they are isolated from society. The contrast can be perceived when the protagonist needs to interact with members of society again. The first time, he goes to a group of Hungarians to find a doctor who would cure his Soviet friend. To achieve this, he needs to put on a uniform, both metaphorically and literally: he can only receive help through the use of power relations, that is, through pretending to be a Soviet and using his gun to force the doctor to help him. But more importantly, at the end of the film,

he tries to go back home using one of the trains in which many other Hungarians are trying to achieve the same goal. When he is on top of it, the group of Hungarian prisoners, who had a conflict with him previously, recognize him and start punching him, preventing him from returning home. This literal act can be interpreted as a metaphor for the impossibility for the protagonist to reintegrate into society having a different set of values. In other words, having a genuine personality, different from the one imposed by the state, means the incapability to live inside society.

Conclusion: Miklós Jancsó's Style as the Cinema of the Inevitable

As it has been exposed in this essay, Miklós Jancsó's style is based on the exposition of power relations, which are very close to the theories exposed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. There are strong similarities, such as how power is executed within people belonging to the same social group or the idea of identity as a pre-established personality that is not actually genuine and which provokes the necessity of adopting an attitude of resistance as a way of obtaining it. The biggest difference appears when it comes to power executed in the absence of freedom, that is when captors interact with prisoners. Whereas for Michel Foucault there is no power when freedom does not exist, for Miklós Jancsó power relations are possible both in the presence or absence of freedom.

After having exposed how similar the ideas of both authors regarding power relations are, I have pointed out an important characteristic of Jancsó in this field, which is the idea of the inevitable. This is, in fact, a concept that also connects him to Foucault. The philosopher pointed out that the oppressed is part of the system of oppression, and this is the basis of Jancsó's discourse. He takes this proposition to the extreme, exposing how the oppressed are accomplices by their own fate, up to the point that they, in some way, participate even in their own death. This is clearly exposed in the already mentioned scene, where the protagonist

forces a doctor to help him by using a gun. In this scene, there are four people against the protagonist, which means that, if they acted, they would probably succeed in taking his gun. And yet, they do nothing. This is just an example of a narrative pattern that appears constantly in his films. This situation could be understood as Jancsó sending the idea that the oppressed accept their role, even if it would mean to be executed. Execution scenes are actually very typical in his cinema.

To conclude, I would like to point out that the cinema of Miklós Jancsó not only reflects the already exposed ideas of power relations but also how they provoke the inevitable, in the form of accepting the role inside the system, the fate that this situation might lead characters and how being part of society establishes a strict set of rules of behaviour thought that people need to adopt them if they want to be integrated. In the end, the individual, deprived of a genuine, authentic personality, cannot control his fate if he stays inside society, because power relations control the way they behave and think.

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Traditional African Values

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Abstract. It is incontrovertible that there are pristine traditional African values for which Africans are identified amidst the cultures of the world. It is also factual that, in contemporary times, Africa is undergoing harrowing experiences due to the corrosion, devaluation and desecration of these values through the uncritical imbibement, assimilation and influences of alien values, which antagonize and conflict with the traditional ones. This work excavates those pristine values, represents and critically appraises them.

Keywords: Africa, values, tradition

1. Introduction

The currency of this work can be perceived through the prism of the vivid description of the state of African values in contemporary African society, offered by L. Mbefo:

> New values have been adopted and canonized. Dishonesty and cheating, fraud and getting away with it have now replaced ancestral moral uprightness and probity. Logic and legal smartness with their quibbling with the nuances of words have banished truth and integrity from traditional values to the archives of antiquarians… Getting rich overnight without working for it has become the new criterion of achievement. (59)

Sad as this observation may appear, it portrays the factual state of affairs in Africa as real as the name of our continent. The statement of fact above though, not intended to romanticize the past, points to an inimical departure from the signposts and cultural values that

accorded Africa resilience in crises and reckoning as the seat of civilization and the aspiration of sister continents.

It is with this insight that this work shall attempt an excavation, representation and a critique of some of the pristine African Traditional values. To arrive at this, the first part of this work will tackle the definition of terms, the second part shall focus on the excavation and representation of these African values, the third shall dwell on the critique and a proposal for the reintegration, re-engineering and refinement of them as a possible way-out of the contemporary value quagmire militating against the continent. It is on this note that the conclusion of this work shall be logically drawn.

2. Definitions of Terms

The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary (1386) defines 'value' variously as the desirability or worth of a thing, intrinsic worth, utility, something regarded as desirable, worthy, or right as a belief, standard or precept.

Corroborating this view, Benjamin Ewelu (40) considers values as standards that, in a given society, determine the action of members. He pursues this line of thought further by noting that African values as standards and serve as the yardstick for measuring success among Africans. In this sense, therefore, values as standards determine praise or blame, respect or honour, achievement or failure within society.

Values are also related to the desirability or worth of things. In this light, value is equilibrated with goodness as the good in a thing that makes it worth pursuing. Upholding this view, George Ukagba avers that:

> The African daily activities and pursuits are anchored on the belief that there is value in acting and living. Whether or not the African has a long or short sight understanding of the object of his pursuit, once there is a value or goodness in it, he sees it as worth pursuing. Hence events worth pursuing are

> value-events, value acts are worth pursuing (Afroxiology: Ethical Study of African Values, 200)

It is worthy to comment that the ontological relation between value and pursuit does not allow for interchangeability. Values ought to precede and initiate pursuit and not vice-versa because not all pursuits have value in the moral sense. Viewed from the correlation between value and goodness, some pursuits lack goodness and, hence, are evil and not worth pursuing.

3. An Excavation of Some African Traditional Values

In a succinct distinction between the West and Africa vis-á-vis authentic development, Iroegbu Panteleon (82) observes that, while what we have in the contemporary western society is a multiplicity of material development to the extinction of the social, spiritual and moral values, what obtained in the economically undeveloped traditional African society was a preponderance of spiritual, moral and human excellence. Regrettably, African contemporary societies are in a confluence of the crises between the invasion of Western materiality over aboriginal humanity-based value system. In the Traditional African axiological system, Iroegbu holds that:

> In its hierarchy of values, the human person, the community, nature and God were primary to the material, the machine, the instrumental to the mere individual, to the objective (in terms of objects) to the artificial, superficial, and the sub-divine and the ethereal. (82)

Elewu (40), elucidating on African aboriginal values, identified sacredness of the human life, extended family system, honesty, fidelity to promise, truthfulness, hard work, good name, hospitality "brotherliness" and friendship.

For E. A. Ruch et al (140-143), self-control and humility, faithfulness, goodness and kindness and solidarity constitute pristine values. He asserts that African ethics is clearly

anthropocentric and socio-centric, thus the key consequence of this ethics and the value which is sought above all else is solidarity, togetherness and a family spirit.

Before venturing into an in-depth exposé of these values, it is necessary to state a caveat that the values in perspective may not only be found in Africa but they are African because they are eminently integrated and expressed in African culture.

3.1. DEEP RELIGIOSITY

The deep religiosity of the African people has assumed almost the stage of a cliché. K. C. Anyanwu observes, concerning this phenomenon, that:

> There exist no institutions in Africa, whether in the social, political or economic field, which would not be based on a religious conception. The African people are among the most religious in the world (*African Phil*, 124).

This phenomenon is not, in any sense, an aftermath of the Western exported and imposed Christianity. Conceding to this notion of pervasive religiosity in Africa, John Mbiti (15) observes:

> The individual is immersed in religious participation, which starts before birth and continues after his death. *(African Religions and Philosophy, 18).*

This phenomenon is an offshoot of the traditional religion that had hitherto been in existence. Asira E. Asira points to this truth when he asserts that:

> It is an indubitable fact that before the advent of colonialism and subsequent coming of Christianity and Islam to Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, there was an indigenous religion… *(Sophia, 71).*

In this traditional religion, worldwide, there is no diametrical line between the spiritual and the physical and, hence, no dichotomy between the transcendent and the immanent as these dimensions

dovetail into each other to the extent that, at times and in some places, one is more apparently real but not exclusive of the other.

The ontological principle operative in this worldview is that of harmonious monism. Explaining this harmonious relationship between dimensions of reality, Chris Ijiomah, says:

> For Africans, in other words, reality is cyclical. The spiritual appears as a physical reality and goes back to the spiritual world and the cycle continues. This means that the physical has an inbuilt spirituality and the spiritual has an inbuilt physicality *(ultimate Reality, 77)*.

Ijiomah (80), quoting Bolaji Idowu, opines that the religious motive in Africa reflects the desire to get the complexity of life phenomenon simplified for understanding through communication with deities. This imposes order upon the life of an African and constitutes his religion.

Religion in traditional African society made no distinction between religious law and moral law. It is what religion forbids that society also forbids and society approves what religion approves. Idowu illustrates this in the case of the Yoruba people of Nigeria by asserting that:

> With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two; and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences *(Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief 146)*.

Here was a world where every existent reality was approached with a sense of awe and sacredness because there was no dualism of the sacred and the profane. There was a harmonious interpenetration between the physical and the spiritual, the visible and the invisible. Therefore, Anyanwu quoting Kwame Nkrumah says:

> For them, heaven was not outside the world but inside it. These African societies did not accept transcendentalism, and may indeed be regarded as having synthesized the dialectical opposites 'outside' and 'inside' by making them continuous, that is by abolishing them *(African Philosophy 122)*.

This made the African conceive God as the creator and providence of the world with little or no distinction between God as the prime mover and the secondary causality of physical objects.

This kind of universe, where nature is filled with religious significance, is undoubtedly a religious universe whose value to the aborigines cannot be underestimated.

3.2. RESPECT FOR LIFE

The centrality of the value of life and its primacy among other values in the traditional African worldview is aptly captured by Stephens Ezeanya in his rendition of the religious philosophy of Africa:

> (…) the religious philosophy of the African is life-centred. Nearly all prayers offered to God, the spirits and the ancestors are reducible in one way or another to prayers for obtaining life, for resolving it, or for preserving it from countless dangers that threaten it. ("Healing in Traditional African Society"2)

Life is viewed as the highest foundation and end-point of all values. The notorious religiosity of the African can be better appreciated from the perspective of his/her search for meaning and protection of the *Sommum Bonum* – life. Iroegbu, observes succinctly that:

> While almost all societies have a respect for life, Africans have deep reverential deference for life, especially human life. Its beginning is elaborately celebrated in pregnancy, birth, naming and initiation ceremonies. Its growth and continuity are feasted in adulthood, and adolescence rites, family rites and communal festivities. Its end is buoyantly celebrated in death rites, departure rituals and funeral festivities. *(Enwisdomisation and African Philosophy 84)*

As a follow up on this, it remains to be emphasized that not all lives were treated with reverential deference except the good life. Placide Tempels, therefore, asserts in this connection:

> Every act, every detail of behaviour every attitude and every human custom which militates against the vital force or against the increase of the hierarchy of the "Muntu" is bad. *(Bantu Philosophy 121)*

"Muntu" here in Bantu ontology depicts that élan vital that is vivacious and connotes a living force. The centrality of the value of Life impelled Jim Unah to declare that:

> (…) social man, in the African ontological setting, is enjoined to do only those acts that would increase the flow of life forces and the refrain from evil acts that may constitute a diminishing of vital force (…) *(African Philosophy: Trends and Projections 20-31)*

Instantiating the position of Unah above, Ekeopara (176) remarks that the traditional Igbo society established a strict system of justice to sanction the activities of persons with immoral and wicked life ("Ndu Ojoo"). Such activities were viewed as diminishing the flow of life and hence reprehensible (Human life and Existence, 17)

Due to the fundamental place of life, its preservation and promotion serve as the gauge for good and bad in the Annang traditional universe. It is for this reason that the originator of life *Awasi*; God the Supreme, and *Obot*; God as nature and creator, is eternally sanctimoniously revered in this society. It is for this reason that such anti-life employment of mystical powers as manifested in sorcery and witchcraft were publicly denounced and if the society had their way, such people were banished from the Annang traditional community.

The cosmological religious universe of the Annang/Ibibio unveils the sense of high value placed on life. This is very expressive in the proverb "Nko atim-me atotot Awasi, anye atuak isong". A literal translation of this proverb into English states that the instrument for digging the soil (Atim-me) first acknowledges God and clears with Him before striking the earth. The earth here was viewed as the harbinger of lives: human, animal, plant and spirit. It was sacrilegious for one to proceed to excavate the habitat of lives without due consultation and clearance from the supreme God; the giver of life.

The centrality of this value among the Annang/Ibibio ethics is built into the social psyche, and such psyche is forcefully reinforced

in everyday discourse and relations when they give their children life-related names to bear, for instance:

Uwemedimo	-	Life is wealth
Nkereuwem	-	I think about life
Ndipmonguwem	-	Where do I hide life?
Ayadu-uwem	-	Will you live life?
Abasiediuwem	-	God is life, etc.

3.3. The Value of Communalism and Other Allied Values

Chukwuemeka Nze asserts that:

> Traditional Africa society has a great asset in its practice of a mode of life called communalism. This used to be the bedrock and the result of the wonderful relationship prevalent in the community as well as the purpose of existence of the community and the African man. (Aspects of Africa, 1)

This scholar's presentation of communalism as a pristine characteristic of the traditional African society and African man attracts more affirmation when viewed through the lenses of the underlying ontology that informed such a worldview. In this respect, Innocent Asouzu in representing the anonymous traditional African philosophers' ontology, notes that:

> For this mind, all aspects of reality are in a relationship of intricate service to each other and to be is to be in a relationship of mutual, joyous complementary service. (The Methods and Princ, 147).

The complementary mindset of the African alluded here views reality in a total and unified manner reprehensive of exclusive polarizations that tend to bifurcate reality into irreconcilable units.

This ontology that informs the African communal worldview is widely observed and variously articulated by different African scholars. On this note, Unah observes that:

> A study of Placide Tempel's work on *Bantu Philosophy,* Marcel Griaule's *Conversations with Ogotommeli,* Maya Doven's *The Living Gods of Haiti* and Alexis Kagame's *La Philosophie bantu-Rwandaise de L'Etre* would reveal that the African metaphysical concept of being is force; that every living thing, that all objects are endowed with force; that reality is an inseparable mixture of "mind" and matter; that all forces are in constant interaction, and that there is a hierarchy of forces concatenated in an all-pervading universe. This accounts for why the ancient African view of the world is described as one of "extraordinary harmony", one of synthetic unity and mutual compatibility among all things. (African Philosophy, 37-38).

Similarly, a discursive presentation of the appreciation of different African thinkers on the communalist system of relations in Africa would expose the importance attached to this value. John Mbiti's renowned statement "I am because we are; and since we are; therefore, I am" (108) depicts the dependence of the individual on the framework of the community to assume meaning and identity. It contrasts with the individual centred isolatory framework of the West underneath the Cartesian: "I think therefore I am". Mbiti's statement exposes the community centeredness axiom of traditional African communalism.

Leopold Senghor also asserts this value when he says, as documented by Ruch and Anyanwu that: "Negro African is collectivist, or, more exactly, communal because it is rather a communion of souls than an aggregate of individuals (…) (Africa) had already realized socialism before the coming of Europeans" (325)

It is this view of communalism as a communion that persuaded Senghor to make the classic but most debated statement that *reason* is Hellenic and *emotion* is African. Obi Oguejiofor explains that, for Senghor, the African way of knowing is an accession of a higher form of consciousness called reason by embrace, which contains the imprint of unity resonating in the African universe.

Kwame Nkrumah sees socialism as the epitome of traditional communalism. Nkrumah, as documented by Oguejifor, observes that the spirit of communalism "is crystallized in its humanism and

its reconciliation of individual advancement with group welfare" (How African is Communalism?, 10).

It was this basic communal welfare that informed the *Ujaama* socialist principle of Julius Nyerere. *Ujaama*, which means family, *familyhood* or brotherhood is based on this cherished value of communalism. Nyerere, reiterating traditional communalism as the basis of his socialism, says:

> Our first step, therefore, must be to re-educate ourselves; to regain our former attitude of mind. In our traditional African society, we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and they took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men (African Socialism: Ujamaa in Practice, 110).

Thus, if we interpret socialism as synonymous with communalism, it becomes an attitude of a mind burdened with the temper of welfare without the subjugative intention of individualism.

Egbeke Aja aptly captures traditional communalism in Africa when he opines:

> African communalism is the existential life of the traditional African which is founded on the belief that all human beings are members of one family of humankind; it is the traditional concern for persons and their well-being. It presupposes that while the family is the unit of an African community, everyone in that community is his brother's or sister's keeper. (Individualism in African Communal Universe, 380)

Nyerere's *familyhood* and Aja's exposition of communalism reflect the principle of interdependence and the notion of beneficial reciprocity undergirding the communal worldview. No individual was strong enough to be self-sufficient in the traditional setting. The Annang aver that "a chief does not shout ('rule') alone (*Aboong isi boono ikpon*), "a tree does not form a forest" (*eto kied isiforoke akat*) and that a finger cannot remove lice from the head (*nuun kied isioho nnon ke iwuo*).

The proverbs unveil the interdependence and beneficial reciprocity informing the Annang view of communalism. The

dependence of the individual on the community was not diminutive of creativity nor did it inhibit assertion of human rights because the community recognized and honoured creativeness as well as protected the individual's right against violation through her justice system. In most cases, the whole community had to rise against the encroachment of another community on an individual's property because, realistically, the individual and his property were seen as part of the larger community and, hence, harm to one becomes endangering of all.

3.4. Beneficial Reciprocity and Interdependence

These two virtues also informed the values of *solidarity* and *hospitality*. They are widely experienced in all spheres. In the traditional African society, the meaning of being a brother's keeper is forcefully lived out in the deep concern that individuals have for each other. The African exhibits passionately the full throes of both happy and sad emotions in empathizing with each other in happy and trying moments.

The deep sense of hospitality was what made a relation to be welcomed in his relation's abode and given accommodation without a prior announcement of coming as is the case with the Western model of hospitality. This overwhelming value colluded to negatively reinforce the colonial exploitation of Africa. A variant of this cultural value is contained in the Ibibio proverb, which says that "the voice of a stranger is sweeter than the sound of a gong" (*uyo esenowo enem akan ekere*). The gong was that instrument that was used in announcing important messages and resolutions to the community. The importance of the gong as illustrated in its use, if symmetrically related with the voice of the stranger, implies that the community listens to the voice of the stranger more and first, compared to the all too familiar voice of the gong and its corresponding native message.

3.5. The Value of Extended Family and Marriage

The average African is incurably family-conscious. In the African setting, the word *family* includes parents, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, etc. The African concept of family is a complex intricately related web that covers and is penetrable through three perspectives (Mbiti, 106:109).

In the first one, the word family includes parents, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sister and immediate relatives.

The second perspective includes departed relatives, which are designated as living dead; these are, as their name implies 'alive' in the memories of their surviving families and are thought to be still interested in the affairs of the family to which they once belonged. Surviving members must not forget them; otherwise misfortune is feared to strike them or their relatives. People give offerings in form of food and libation to them to mark their belongingness and to serve as tokens of fellowship, communion, remembrance, respect, and hospitality.

The third perspective includes the unborn members who are still in the loins of the living. They are buds of hope and expectation and they are guarded and protected to save the family from extinction. To this extent, African parents are anxious to see their children find husbands and wives, otherwise, failure to do so means in effect the death of the unborn and a diminishing of the family as a whole.

Comparatively, this conception of the family has a much wider circle and area of coverage than the conception of family in the West. There, the family is conceived as a household, which is nuclear in nature and is made up of the father, mother and children.

Family ties are so strong in African culture that Africans do not make a sharp distinction between brother, half-brother/sister, cousins, nephews or nieces. The terms 'brother' and 'sister' cover all degrees of blood relationship. All relations up to the 3rd and 4th generation regard themselves as brothers and sisters and, on this extensive framework of relationship, they deeply share their problems.

The extended nature of African families, which make up African society, offers the individual both economic and social security. This is what Sofola, quoted in Uduigwomen et al. (83-85), calls *Familism* or *Familyhood*. He defines *familism* variously as:

(i) A feeling of belonging to the family group.
(ii) Integration of activities of family members for the attachment of family objectives.
(iii) The utilization of family resources to help needy members.
(iv) Rallying to the support of a member if he is in trouble.
(v) The maintenance of continuity between the parental family and new family units.

Familism is a panacea for the disease of individualism and excessive materialism plaguing the modern world.

To combat the ills of greed, eccentric self-centeredness and unhealthy competition that is eliminative of the other as against the altruistic essence of familism, Julius Nyerere, former Tanzanian President adopted *familyhood* as his development ideology for independent Tanzania and expressed it in the concept of *Ujaama*. The essential goal of *Ujaama* is to build a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities and where social justice is practised.

Eulogizing the ideals of the extended family system in Nigeria, Elechi Amadi, quoted by Uduigwomen et al., says:

> As a result of this system, the individual was never without help. No one was absolutely destitute, so the kind of insanity that is caused by the pressures of urban life and loneliness were virtually unknown in rural Nigeria. In a system that had no asylums, poor houses or old people homes, the eagle and-kite system proved very effective indeed. (85-86)

The inception and survival of the family, as noted earlier, is marriage. For Africans, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the nexus point for all members of a given community: the departed, the living and the yet unborn. Marriage is a drama in which everyone

becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Marriage is the originating ground of families and is not a contract between two persons; the groom and the bride, as in the West, but a covenant between two extended families, kindred, villages. In marriage, traditional injunctions are binding on the extended relatives which must not be broken without sanctions.

In Africa, marriage is a duty required by society and he/she who does not fulfil it is a curse to the community, a rebel and a lawbreaker (Mbiti 133). Significantly, marriage in Africa is not merely a mutual union for complementation but is typically a union for procreation. Without procreation, marriage is incomplete since procreation is the hub on which the perpetuation of the human species in the family revolves. Husband and wife are supposed to procreate to perpetuate the chain of humanity. In some African societies, the belief is that the living dead are reincarnated in parts so that aspects of their personalities or physical characteristics are reborn in their descendants. This explains the notion of personal immortality.

This notion, in West Africa, is aptly coached in the phenomenon of "partial reincarnation" explained by E. B. Idowu and quoted by Kofi Asare.

> Certain dominant lineage characteristics which keep recurring through births and thus ensuring the continuity of the vital existence of the family or clan (138)

Idowu's insight above clearly highlights that the personal immortality of the living dead greatly depends on his/her progenies. This dependence is forcefully perceived in the names that some Africans bear. For example, Asare (138) notes that the Akan of Ghana bear the name "Apabio", meaning "the person has come again". In the Yoruba culture, "Iyabo" means, "mother returns"; "Yetunde" – "mother has come a second time"; "Babatunde" – "Father has come again" etc.

4. A Critique and a Proposal

The contemporaneous crisis of identity in Africa is essentially a crisis of values. The envelopment, assimilation and near abolition of these traditional African values have witnessed another inevitable turn in the internationally alarming suicide bomb attempt of Farouk Abdulmutallab. Mr Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian passenger in the airline, which was travelling between Amsterdam, Holland and Detroit, USA according to the story chronicled in *The Sun Newspaper* (online version of January 09, 2009) never had the opportunity in his upbringing to benefit either from any element of parental influence or from the value of his native community that moulded his suave and polished father. This child left home for abroad at a time he was barely 12 years old. He had attended the international school at Lome, from where he relocated to Europe and the Middle East. In those lonely years of his sojourn in alien cultures, he had been chaperoned into such anti-values which promoted unremitting individualism and extremities.

The international disrepute and the listing of Nigeria on the U.S. Terror watch, which the misadventure of this person, who is only a Nigerian by nativity and a non-Nigerian in cultural value affiliations, has forced down our spines the reality of exposing the vulnerable and natively uninitiated minds to the values of alien cultures. This necessitates a call for the reenactment and re-articulation of the traditional pristine African values to counter the effect of multiculturalism, cultural clash and cultural imperialism that have occasioned the twilight and obliteration of Traditional African values. In the Traditional African universe, an act of suicide bombing will tantamount to poisoning the native wine pot kept in the village square for the refreshment of the body on return from an arduous day's job. It was a taboo that attracted the most stringent penalty of total banishment and maybe death in some societies. Conversely, this was a crime that never occurred in the traditional milieu due to the ingrained traditional values in the universe.

A re-evaluation of contemporary values *vis-à-vis* the regeneration,

re-engineering and refinement of the traditional African values will aid curb the prevalent menaces maligning our society. The profanity our sense of religiosity and morality suffers through the exposure of Africans, both young and old, to obscene scenes via the internet is gathering alarming momentum. The sense of the sacred and moderation are thrown to the dogs as sophisticated crimes are committed through the internet with the sole aim of becoming a typical yahoo billionaire. Here, one witnesses the jettisoning of the traditional values of communalism and beneficial reciprocity in the heat of individualism and materialism that is fuelling these high-tech crimes.

Today, corruption in its fullest gamut has unfolded in the colours of fraud, money laundering, electoral malpractices, cheating, dishonesty, official usurpations, and abuse of discretion, clientelism, extortion, bribery, nepotism, etc. This corruption has caused the haemorrhage experienced in the socio-economic fabric of African countries. How will this have thrived if we were seeing each other as brothers and sisters knowing that "what belongs to one belongs to all". This haemorrhage would ease when those pristine values are regenerated and refined to attend to contemporary menaces as all known imported anodynes have failed.

In the event of this regeneration and refinement, some pristine values which opened us to vulnerability ought to be refined. The value of hospitality, which made us open our heart and embrace the colonialists while they turned around to usurp the gesture and plunder our state, denigrating us as uncivilized, should be reenergized with an attendant circumspective cautiousness.

The accusation against communalism, that it marginalizes the individual in his/her rights and assertiveness in its over accentuation on community centeredness needs to be corrected and its principles synergized with the principles of justice and human rights protection to have an internal and international appeal in today's globalized world.

The present system of education needs a complete overhaul to reintegrate the refined pristine values in the syllabuses of our

schools. Here, research into these traditional values must be sponsored and the findings integrated into the policies of the nations, implemented and legalized to ensure an ordered absorption of the re-energized traditional values.

Through these, the contemporary culture of death enshrined in fanaticism and suicide bombing will be countered by the value of the sacredness of life, the rapacious culture of corruption will be countered by the principles of communalism and beneficial reciprocity, the sacrilege of obscenity will be countered by the value of religiosity and sanctity. This will lead Africa to her El Dorado as it will be brimming in her glory as of the seat of civilization, the apple of God's eye and the aspiration of all nations.

5. Conclusion

This work recapitulated the pristine traditional African values and critically appraised them. Consequently, a call for the reevaluation of contemporary values *vis-à-vis* the regeneration, re-engineering and refinement of the pristine values is proposed. However, not without jettisoning those aspects of our cultural values that are anachronistic while integrating Western values that are good and progressive. The work submits that Africa will regain her hidden and plundered glory through the implementation of the above proposal.

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Locating Irrationality in Pandemics: An Appraisal of Indian Media and Literature

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Abstract. Biology tends to reveal its mysteries to humans in numerous ways. The uncountable shades of biological problems have always been countered through logical and rationalistic approaches. However, certain pathogenic diseases like pandemics have always resulted in irrational responses which, most of the time, crop up from fear. Albeit, fear is inevitable; its upsurge results in a plethora of irrational responses like superstition, hatred, blame, stigma, to name a few. The article contextualizes the Indian literature on pandemics from the nineteenth century and the media coverage on the current Corona crisis to examine the irrationality towards pandemics. It explores whether or not there is a change in the behaviour of people from medieval to modern India. It also reflects upon questions like why is irrationality aggravated during a pandemic. The study concludes with how the reaction of nineteenth-century India is incidentally similar to the response that has been recorded during the Covid 19 pandemic, despite the technological advancement and modernization.

Keywords: fear, irrationality, pandemics, Covid-19, stigma, superstition, India

Introduction

Epidemics and pandemics have always been a determining part of human history and have been instrumental in shaping the political and socio-economic aspects of human civilization. The massive effect on human society has occurred due to their lasting effects for centuries, and on being responsible for millions of deaths, the ongoing coronavirus[1] is not an exception.

The number of people infected and the loss of lives that have happened by Covid-19 so far has brought people face to face with the horrors of death. When a pandemic sweeps through the population, it generates a multitude of reactions both at the individual and collective levels. Every society suffering from a disease, diverted and frustrated by its effects, has tried to develop a variety of ideas and beliefs to deal with it. Epidemics are humanitarian crises and, hence, the subject of the humanities, as much as they are the subjects of social sciences, biological and medical experts. Therefore, the role that literature plays in understanding the social aspects of this global catastrophe becomes important. It indeed is a fact that together with novelists, some of the most influential global personalities like Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky and Slavoj Žižek have been opining on COVID-related matters. Hence, in conjunction with the biomedical paradigm, Humanities has an active role in 'reading' diseases and analyzing their effects on those affected. (Nayar: 2020)

Researchers[1] who have studied the history of pandemics propounded that their intensity has been rising from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Whatever happens in a society is reflected inevitably in literature. Hence, plagues find mention in the oldest works of literature. The most famous works of European literature are Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man,* Albert Camu's *The Plague,* and many others[2].

Similarly, in the Indian sub-continental literature, epidemics are dealt with prominence in the works of writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', and many others. By offering a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people during epidemics, and divulging the details of the socio-cultural context of these cataclysmic events, these writers have taken into consideration the response and plight of the masses. The literary or historical accounts of these writers also reveal the narratives of fear and erratic behaviour that remain entrenched within the global psyche as repercussions of an epidemic or pandemic. Thus, it reveals the inevident nature of literature that

attempts to preserve social happenings and allows the reader to revisit and reimagine the past.

This article contextualizes the Indian literature from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century to look at how society has reacted to epidemics. Since it always takes time to develop a literary work, the paper thus explores the behaviour of Indian citizens during the coronavirus pandemic that has been primarily reflected through the different forms of mass media. The paper sheds light on the divergences or convergences that have arisen in the societal reactions across centuries in Indian society. It will look into the transition from medieval to modern India through the available literature on epidemics. Paradoxical though it may appear in the age of technology and innovations, it is nevertheless a fact that unorthodox notions and superstitious beliefs are still prevalent in India despite the current literacy rate being 74.04% (Profile - Literacy - Know India: National Portal of India, 2020). The paper thus explores how society has remained unchanged, regardless of immense technological, scientific and educational advancement.

LITERATURE, MEDIA AND PANDEMICS

India, being a developing country, has encountered a variety of epidemics and pandemics across centuries. The table below (*see* Table 1) renders the data of several episodes of pandemics and epidemics that have been experienced by the Indian population from the nineteenth century till date:

Table 1: Pandemics and Epidemics in India from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century.

Year	Disease
1817	Ist Cholera Pandemic
1829	IInd Cholera Pandemic
1852	IIIrd Cholera Pandemic
1863	IVth Cholera Pandemic
1881	Vth Cholera Pandemic

1896	Bombay Plague Epidemic
1899	VIth Cholera Pandemic
1918	Influenza Pandemic
1970-1990	Polio Epidemic
1974	Small Pox Epidemic
1994	Surat Plague Epidemic
2002	Plague of Northern India
2003	Dengue Epidemic/ SARS Epidemic
2005	Meningococcal Meningitis Epidemic
2006	Chikungunya Outbreak/ Dengue Outbreak
2009	Gujarat Jaundice epidemic/ H1N1 Flu Pandemic
2014	Odisha Jaundice Epidemic
2015	Indian Swine Flu Outbreak
2018	Nipah Outbreak
2019	COVID-19

Source: Compiled from different historical accounts[3].

The practice of reading literature as history finds its origin in the New Historicist approach to literary studies, propounded by American critic Stephan Greenblatt. New historicism is a method based on the parallel readings of a literary and non-literary text, giving them equal importance. The parameter of treating all types of text as equals is suggested by Louis Montrose, an American critic, who claims that New Historicism deals with 'the textuality of history and the historicity of the text'. It should be noted that 'historicity of texts' means the 'cultural specificity and social embedment of all modes of writing', the rootedness of a text in the social-historical, political and cultural ambience of its production. Whereas 'textuality of history' refers to the fictionality and constructed-ness of history (Montrose 1989: 15-23). New Historicism is parallel to Derrida's notion that reality is textualized and Foucault's idea of social structures as determined by dominant discursive practices. Thus, New Historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and

intellectual history through literature. (Mambrol 2016)

A text can be understood as created under the influence of the historical background and the writer's own life experience, and that it, in turn, exerts an influence on readers in the then historical context. Alternatively, in Montrose's words, 'the writing and reading of texts are being reconstructed as historically determined and determining modes of cultural work'. (Montrose,1989). Therefore, in the production of literary works mentioned in the paper, the particular writers must have been affected by the socio-economic and political factors. Moreover, the works of literature also have an impact on the society that consumes them.

Pramod K. Nayar, who teaches at the University of Hyderabad, argues that to scrutinize a society grappling with a pandemic, the constituent elements of the humanities help. The fact that literary text and the arts have represented the suffering of populations since ancient times is to be considered foremost. Recent heightened interest in the pandemic genre and the eco-disaster fictions provides testimony to this. Nayar describes that literary and cultural representations, from fiction to film, from paintings to memes address questions like "Whose suffering is given priority? How are the deaths of different people from different social, ethnic, and racial backgrounds portrayed? Whose deaths are 'grievable' (to borrow Judith Butler's framing question in *Frames of War* 2009)?" And many more. (Nayar 2020)

Alongside the suffering, a sense of fear has always surfaced in the pages of literature manifesting the repercussions of pandemics. The uncontrollable rise in the rate of mortality or the inevitable morbidity in epidemics throughout history has always incited a fear of infection amongst the population. Scholars such as G. Papas et al. reflect on it and claim that such outbreaks have ingrained an involuntary impulse of 'germ-panic'. (Papas et al. 2009: 743)

Our article further states that there are three reasons[4] why germ-panic has such a stronghold on the human psyche. This anxiety extends (in the case of patients and exposed persons) beyond the physical consequences of infection, to social consequences such as

stigmatization. Since the agent is unknown, a lack of preparedness on the part of medical authorities and misleading information reproduced by the media may further aggravate these pathological psychological responses. The article cites the example of the SARS epidemic to show how both these factors have been recognized during such times. Media miscommunications and inconsistent health policies have also been highlighted as factors amplifying stigmatization (Pappas et al 2009: 744) The fact that media prefers to constantly discuss an issue, even though for awareness, also enhances the sense of fear. There is constant exposure to images of people rushing to buy flu vaccines and discussions on the utility and potential shortage of antiviral agents. Apart from this, journalists start reporting the death toll of the previous pandemics, the hundreds of millions of human victims expected worldwide and the anticipated expense needed to enhance preparedness. Society feels overwhelmed by the amount of information that it receives, to the point that the same information becomes instrumental in deciding their behaviour towards the reception of the disease. Pappas et al., cite the example of the history of AIDS, another infectious disease, to highlight the fact that such discrimination continues to exist, and targeted populations are marginalized through germ-panic (ibid).

Since responses to any pandemic vary considerably by context, Indian society too has displayed an array of reactions that can be studied under various themes. Over millennia, there has been a consistent pattern to the behaviour of humans in the Indian context during epidemics. The picture we glean from numerous accounts tells us that, during plague or pandemics, in particular the hoarding, the panicking, the fear and the blaming has always been there. Nevertheless, the good news with plague is that they end and leave for reading literature that captures the essence of life.

BLAME, STIGMA AND HATRED: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

During an outbreak, the negative association between a person or a

group of people who share the disease is a common practice. People are stereotyped, discriminated against, labelled and treated separately on account of having a link with the disease. Such treatment also negatively affects those who do not have the disease but share other characteristics with the group. Throughout history, people have found solace in putting the blame of a disease on an individual or a community. Sometimes, this extends even to countries and the entire nation has to bear the brunt of a natural and unavoidable occurrence.

Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), a pioneer of modern Odia prose and the father of Indian short stories, wrote *Rebati* (1898) - his first short story delineating the stigma that revolves around a pandemic. Rebati, the protagonist cherishes a dream of education, which gets materialized with the help of her father, Shayambandu and the school teacher Basu Dev, though against the wish of her orthodox grandma. After a few years, a tragedy strikes the village and locals are devastated by cholera. Shayambandhu becomes the first man who dies of it. The news spreads like a wildfire, and the immediate responses of people ranged from skunking inside to latching off their doors and windows to keep themselves safe from the cruel hands of cholera. Rebati runs here and there, knocking at every door, crying for help, but nobody comes forward except Basu. Tognotti[5] remarks, "when the plague spreads, no medicine could help, and no one could stop it from striking; the only way to escape was to avoid contact with infected persons and contaminated objects" (E. Tognotti 2013). However, researchers find it unsympathetic and selfish to some extent. Instead of being sympathetic, neighbours, and people of the community, rejected the family and secluded them.

Master Bhagwan Das, a renowned Hindi writer, in his story *Plague Ki Chudail*[6], delves into the fear psychosis that traps the people of Allahabad during the epidemic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is believed that the bubonic plague came to India through the colonial trading route in 1896. The plague killed around one million people in India, and hundreds of thousands of

people were forced to abandon their homes, seeking safe shelter. (Statista 2020).

The title is self-explanatory. *Plague Ki Chudail* touches upon the stigmatization that an epidemic brings along. In the story, a woman gets infected with the virus and the doctor, in fear of infection, hastily declares her dead. No relatives, but servants are paid to dispose of the body and take her to the final journey. Yet, they are not ready to perform her last rites as per the religious customs. One of them says, "Patients of plague, cholera smallpox, when dead, should be thrown without performing any ritual" (Hindi Samay). She regains consciousness after a few hours. When she comes back, people believe she is a witch. Not because she was declared dead some hours back, but for the reason that the disease had affected her facial features and she looked "scary" to them. This reflects the stigma that is attached to the dead bodies of infected patients. This stigmatization continues even today. During the spread of Coronavirus, there have been several incidences of families not willing to accept the bodies of Coronavirus victims. Primarily, there is a fear of contamination due to which there has been news about cemeteries denying burials and people attacking vehicles carrying dead bodies.

The intensity of stigmatization is high to the level that, according to a report published by *The Tribune*, a 25-year-old man was thrashed and left unconscious with severe injuries on the suspicions of being a "COVID-19 carrier" in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh (*Tribune* 2020). Anita Rampal, a professor at Delhi University, has a few observations to share on the same topic and writes, "Attacks on doctors and health-care workers asked to vacate rented homes, and communally charged media reports invoking terms such as the 'superspreaders' of the Nizamuddin 'hotspot', have only heightened hate and suspicion" (*The Wire* 2020).

According to a report published by BBC News, after several members of an Islamic group called the *Tablighi Jamaat* from *Nizamuddin*[7], tested positive, false claims about Muslims deliberately spreading the virus became viral. BBC News took notice of these

accusations and featured them as a story on their official website, where they issued data that shows how misinformation targeting Muslims spiked in the first week of April. (Menon 2020)

The same report cites the statement of Dr Zafarul Islam, the chairman of the Minority Commission of Delhi, who said that not only people associated with the *Tablighi Jamaat* were targeted; there were attacks on Muslims in all parts of India. In several parts of the country, there were calls for an economic boycott of Muslim businesses.

Anita Rampal also questions the functioning of the *Aarogya Setu* application that is being propagated by the Indian government and made mandatory by some employers and institutions. The mobile application which geo-traces people's location and informs them how distant they are from an infected person, not only raises questions of compromising one's own privacy and that of an infected person, but also of possibly creating panic, with the stigma of coming close to someone being perceived as "untouchable" (*The Wire* 2020).

Launched as a means to create awareness, the tracking feature of the *Aarogya Setu* app renders a sense of fear and there is an urge to stay away from the infected person, even in times of need. This stigmatization continues even after the infected person has recovered. When the government publicizes an app like this, it should also make sure that the emotions of brotherhood prevail in a crisis in order to fight it at a national level.

Fenglong Wang *et al*., in their paper "Territorial traps in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic" discuss how the fear and mistrust that has been triggered by COVID-19 may resonate and even augment territorial thinking in both nationalist stereotyping and geopolitical strategies. They also point out how some racist government agents have labelled this virus as the 'Wuhan Virus' (Wang *et al* 2020). This racial stigmatization has operated at various levels in the context of India. Since Wuhan is the epicentre of the outbreak of the novel virus, China has been blamed as the carrier of it. Most of the Indians who have been evacuated from China,

infected or uninfected, have faced an unwelcoming attitude in their county. Indian advertisements that should have ideally taken the responsibility of educating the masses, on the contrary, mislead the audience. AMUL, an Indian dairy cooperative society, released a new topical advertisement (*India Today* 2020) on the coronavirus outbreak that features Indians being evacuated from China through two Air-India flights. "*Wuhan Se Yahaan Le Aaye*" (those who landed in the flight brought the virus from Wuhan).

> It is alleged that this fuels one of the many COVID-19 myths that SARS-CoV-2 either escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China or was a bioweapon created deliberately in the country (Fleeming 2020). However, Chinese diplomats and some scientific studies refute all these claims. (Dutta 2020)

This advertisement by AMUL can be held responsible for instigating hatred and blame for people coming from or belonging to China. Apart from people, Chinese restaurants too, have to bear the brunt of serving food that is based on Chinese cooking, despite having no contact with China *per se*. The problem remains throughout history that in such situations, people conveniently find an entity to blame on. Despite the repeated requests of the government[8] regarding abstaining from such activities, people still indulge in these and propagate stigmatization at various levels (Dua 2020). Sandip Roy, a journalist and radio host, elaborates how the virus has brought to the attention of people a civilization gap. He argues:

A local radio station actually had a jingle telling people it was fine to eat chicken. And a walking tour in Kolkata that gives people a taste of the city's old Chinatown has been working hard to tell its nervous clientele that it is perfectly safe to have fried rice and chilli chicken. (Roy 2020)

This verifies the observations that Indians have a lack of sense when following the norms of social distancing. It is more of a thing of convenience than of care. Considering India's history of class and caste discrimination, this case of untouchability, blame, stigma and eventual hatred are very convincing. Even though the Preamble to

the Constitution of India is held high with "Fraternity" as an important part of it, Indians still miss out on this integral value during pandemics. Unfortunately, the people of India focus more on the disease than the needs of the diseased.

MISINFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS

On Feb 15, 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, while addressing the Munich Security Conference, asserted that "we're not just fighting an epidemic; we are fighting an 'infodemic'[9] (*The Wire* 2020). The same observations are found in the factsheet released by the Pan American Health Organization and WHO, which reveals how the COVID-19 outbreak has been accompanied by a massive infodemic: an overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. This oversupply of hoaxes can be regarded as a culprit against the misinformation and confusion related to the nature of this disease.

WHO issued a few guidelines regarding the importance of health hygiene to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and recommended washing and scrubbing hands for around twenty seconds with soap or sanitiser (Kripto 2020). Following these guidelines, even though partially, various governments around the world, including the Indian one, have promoted the use of ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol-based hand sanitisers for hand hygiene. This has resulted in high public demand for these products. As a result, there is also a race to manufacture and market alcohol-based hand sanitisers (gel) and hand rubs (liquid) (together referred to as "ABHRs") (Shula and Upadhyay 2020). Hand sanitiser is a convenient method of cleaning. However, WHO recommended using hand sanitisers only as an alternative when one does not have access to soap and water. Additionally, according to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, a hand sanitiser may not be as effective as washing hands. Nevertheless, this has boosted

the marketing campaign of sanitisers and people have fallen prey to this pseudo marketing, with a sudden demand by consumers being noticed lately. This has also led to the most outlandish acts of social service, when people started distributing sanitisers in the name of giving back to society, in times of need.

According to Statista (a German online portal for statistics), a survey about the impact of the COVID-19 on Indians in March 2020 reveals how panic-buying commenced among consumers days before the lockdown was announced, much like in other countries. Half of the respondents were not able to buy hand sanitisers at all due to their unavailability. Hand sanitisers from unknown brands were purchased by about 26 per cent because reputed brands were sold out during the survey period.

It should be noted that a fake or misleading news piece that has been circulated in the virtual world can have a real impact on many people. If the recent studies are analyzed, it could be inferred that this game of misinformation, emerging from unreliable sources, has been a peculiar problem in India during the Coronavirus pandemic. Prevalent marketing practice in Indian society has been to reap benefits and capitalize from tragic situations. It has been observed that brands generally capitalize on this opportunity to build the trust of the consumer in their product. According to a report published amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of brand advertisings on TV has increased by 10 per cent in week 17 of the current calendar (Apr 25 to May 1), as compared to week 16 (Apr 18 to 24). Week 17 had 2138 brands advertising on TV, as compared to 1948 brands in week 16 (Malvani 2020). The way a brand responds in times of a crisis influences the masses and affects the psychology of all those who are grappling with it. In an attempt to promote their brands, advertising companies tend to extend dubious claims without any sufficient evidence in support of them. False advertisings claiming their medicines have the potential to cure Coronavirus were being promoted without any scientific evidence or carrying out proper research and development procedure. Rupin Chopra, in his article *India: Rise in False and Misleading Advertisements*

amidst Coronavirus Outbreak, cites companies that have been found following such practices. He argues that the economic sector of society can be held responsible for creating exponential fear amongst the general public. Several of the products that claimed to have the potential of curing Coronavirus have been recently delisted by Amazon. Likewise, Facebook too has banned all misleading advertisements for products claiming to cure it[10]. (Chopra 2020) Similarly, Arihant Mattress tried to selling "anti-Coronavirus" mattresses, while Baba Ramdev (MD of Patanjali) is marketing his Giloy (Tinosporacordifolia juice) tablets as being an effective cure against the virus. These alternative cures are not only legally but ethically wrong as well. They also pose health risks to consumers.

A report was published by Boom (an IFCN Certificate Fact Checker), titled *Fake News in the Times of Coronavirus: A Boom Study*. It shows 178 fact checks on Covid-19-related misreports from January to May 2020. The study was conducted through data and evidence of viral information, dealing with topics like prediction theory, bioweapon, economy, health, politics, Italy, China, cure, prevention, treatment, lockdown and communalism that were trending between January to April. While most of the misleading claims were circulated with videos (35%), there were also a significant number of text messages with fake cures being shared (29.4%), treatments or quotes from celebrities, along with images (29.4%) that were either misrepresented or doctored. There were a small number of audio clips (2.2%) going viral with false context (Chodari 2020).

Similarly, scholars from the University of Michigan researched misinformation in India. Their study, which was released on Apr 18, 2020, used 243 unique instances of misinformation from an archive maintained by Tattle Civic Technology. The archive represents all the stories that have been debunked by six fact-checkers: AltNews, BOOM live, Factly, India Today Fact Check, Quint Webqoof, and News Mobile Fact Checker, certified by the International Fact-Checkers Network (IFCN) between Jan 23 and Apr 12, 2020. The misinformation that was circulating on various social media apps, as found by the study, were classified into seven categories, of which,

culture, government and doctored statistics. About 62 fake stories were related to culture, defined as messages targeting a particular socio-religious, ethnic group, followed by 54 instances of fake news around government announcements and advisories. See *Table 2*.

Table 2. Types of Misinformation in India

Category	Instances	Definition
Culture	62	Messages with cultural references such as to a religious/ ethnic/social group or a popular culture reference
Cure, Prevention & Treatment	37	Messages suggesting remedies (alternative or mainstream), preventive measures, and vaccines-related misinformation
Nature & the Environment	16	Messages that have references to animals and the environment.
Casualty	36	Messages relating to deaths, illness of people in the pandemic, including graphic images of suffering (not including doctored statistics)
Business and economy	15	Messages relating to scams, panic-buying and target businesses with fake positive cases.
Government	54	Messages have government announcements and advisories or refer to police, judiciary, political parties.
Doctored statistics	23	Messages that have exaggerated numbers of positive cases or death counts and fake advisories.

Source: Study on Misinformation (released on Apr 18, 2020), University of Michigan.

A similar report was published by BBC News in July 2020. As the report suggested, false claims were spreading in India through WhatsApp messages and social media posts that claimed eating vegetarian food and eliminating meat from the diet could prevent getting Coronavirus. As a consequence, people stopped eating meat.

There were reports that some of the meat traders were giving away chicken for free because they did not know what to do with the stock. These false claims had an impact on the meat market, contributing to losses of up to 130 billion rupees in the poultry industry (Menon 2020).

Social media is full of false cures, with unverified videos of doctors doing the rounds. Anita Rampal explains, in *The Wire*, how these false claims and misinformation have also been propagated by influential people who have the potential to impact society. She writes, "no less than the former president of the Indian Medical Association endorsed the mass lighting of candles and flashlights at 9 pm for 9 minutes on Apr 5, with an inventive concoction of scientific jargon and yogic principles (Rampal 2020).

Religious Beliefs and Superstitions

Harishankar Parsai (Indian satirist), in one of his essays titled *Gardish Ke Din*[11] (1971), recalls terrible times from his childhood during a plague epidemic in the 1930s, when he lost his mother. Parsai describes how, in the toughest of times, religious scriptures were enough to provide their family with the kind of relief that is expected from medicine. He writes:

> The plague raged in our small rural town, and most people had abandoned their homes and led them to live in huts in the jungle. Our family had not. Ma was terribly sick. We could not take her to the jungle. In our desolate neighbourhood, enveloped in silence, only our house showed any trace of life. The nights were dark, and their only light was a tiny candle in our home. And I was scared of candles. Even the town's stray dogs had disappeared. In the overwhelming stillness of those nights, even our own voices frightened us. But every evening we would sit near our dying mother and sing the aarti – 'Om jai jagdish hare. Bhaktjano ke sankat pal me door kare'

There have been multiple reports of superstitious activities post the sudden rise of COVID-19 cases in India. People of Kapranda district, Bihar, performed *puja* (prayer) at home to keep the deadly

Coronavirus at bay. The village women collected the trash from their homes in earthen pots after the *puja* and disposed of it outside their village. The villagers believed that, by doing so, they would be able to restrict the entry of the deadly virus into their place (Pureeu 2020). In some other districts, people believed rumours that hair strands are coming out of the 'Bal-kand' chapter of Ram Charitra Manas. It was circulated that the hair strand should be boiled in water, and this water should be consumed to cure Coronavirus. Surprisingly, several people claim to have found hair strands in the 'Bal-kand' chapter of Ram Charitra Manas (New India Express 2020). As if this was not science-sceptical enough, India's ruling political party, Bharatiya Janata Party, has been displaying irrational behaviours as a defence strategy for Coronavirus. According to a report published in *Scroll.in* (an online Indian News portal), members from Bharatiya Janata Party gathered in crowds to drink and promote cow-urine as a vaccine to Covid-19 (Gupta 2020). This claim was soon refuted somewhere around March 2020, when people realized that, instead of curing, this could make people sick.

Lately, there have been drills of *thali-banging* and *diya-lighting* (beating pans and lighting candles), as urged by the Prime Minister to get rid of the Coronavirus, instead of providing genuine consolations in terms of economic and health-care relief. This reminds us of Phanishwar Nath Renu's short story *Pahalwan Ki Dholak* (*Wrestler's Drum*), published in 1944. The story is set in North India, which places, side by side, the cholera outbreak and the changing socio-political conditions in nineteenth-century India. The protagonist, Luttan Singh Pahalwan, loses his sons as well as his life in this epidemic. Amidst the horror of the cholera epidemic, Luttan would beat his drum from evening till morning to wane away from the effects of the epidemic. The villagers started considering him as the only ray of hope in this crisis instead to rely on medicine or vaccine. The unbroken rhythm of Singh's drum used to convey the message that the epidemic would not kill the spirit of the people, but the villagers started perceiving it as the only solution to their problem. (Aaroh 2014). These superstitious beliefs are nothing but

an escape from the acceptance of the reality and nature of the disease. People generally resort to such unproductive thoughts and actions when an antidote or the promise of a vaccine in the immediate future seems difficult.

Greed and Inhumanity

A moving account of the 1918 Spanish Flu, almost a hundred years back, which claimed an estimated 12-17 million lives in India and between 50 million and 100 million globally, is found in Ahmed Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi*, published in 2011. Ali poignantly describes the uncountable deaths that touched almost every family in the city and writes: "there was not a single hour of the day when a few dead bodies were not carried outside the city to be buried" (Ali 2011: 172-173). He also makes an extremely pitiable picture with the description of shroud thieves stealing sheets from the graves and how gravediggers raised their fees four-fold during the pandemic. "They did not bother to see that the grave was properly dug or deep enough or not. They had so many more to dig". Ali wrote that Delhi became the city of the dead. Nevertheless, the people of Delhi, manifesting their opportunistic temperament to the most, wrote songs on leaflets and sold them for a *pice* (a former monetary unit of India) each. He further writes: "How deadly this fever is / Everyone is dying of it / The hospitals are gay and bright / But sorry is men's plight (Ali 2011, 171). Quite similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic has once more proved how ruthless, oppressive and corrupt the society could be in times of crisis. There have been reports of how some doctors have been swindling their patients out of their money in this distressing situation, leaving them destitute. The morality flaws of society are also evident in the behaviour towards the underprivileged section, like the migrant labourers who had to walk hundreds of kilometres, with empty stomachs and bare feet, in order to reach their homes. Not only that there were reports of how they were overcharged for the convenience. It illustrates how a pandemic

could make people blinded in greed and lead to their abandoning of qualms in monetizing the hardships and struggles of fellow society members.

CONCLUSION

The study of pandemics through literature not only reflects the attitude of people across ages but also how they shape the human mind and tends to modify their behaviour. Different novelists have used plague as a topos to show its multiple dimensions. Fear has been a common and inevitable phenomenon during the pandemics; however, fear that is depicted in literature can be constructive if it motivates society to adopt preventive measures. The lack of literature on the Coronavirus and the abundance of information through mass media like television and the internet, creates a gap between the ideal practices and the adopted strategies. The whole series of evidence suggest that the proclivity to blame, hate, stigmatize, is not a pre-modern idea; rather, people still stick to the same beliefs**.** In this view, irrationality towards pandemic questions the rationality and scientific approach of educated Indians. It is difficult to compile all sources on the epidemics and pandemics in Indian literary history. This study was conducted, therefore, with the belief that it may divert people's attention towards literature to know more about their ignorance and decipher the actual picture of pandemics. It is also a sad reality that epidemics will continue to strike in societies in the days to come. One has no control over their advent but adopting a rational and humanitarian approach has to be given immense importance. In the earlier epidemics, the climate had been of a significant impulse to control the disease; however, there has been no climatic effect on Covid, which makes it essential for the people to be more vigilant as the recovery rate is directly proportional to the efforts of the masses to control the disease. Some Indian writers, including Gayatri Spivak, have also emphasized how human brotherhood enables society to survive. We

need to understand and realize the value of unity and brotherhood in sailing through such crises.

NOTES

1. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the newly discovered Coronavirus (which originated in Wuhan, China). When an infected person coughs or sneezes, the COVID-19 virus spreads through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.
2. All these works reveal the bleak conditions of humanity during pandemics. Daniel Defoe, Journal of the Plague Year, gives us an account of the Great Plague in London (1665). It describes the devastating events of a city faced with superstition, hysteria, unemployment, looting and fraud. Shelly describes the future earth of the late 21st century devastated by an unknown pandemic that sweeps across the world. Camus' The Plague is a story of the death rates and citizens of Algeria (Oran) due to the plague.
3. Historical accounts like Patrick R. Saunders Hastings and Daniel Krewski's reviewing the history of pandemic influenza and the "Brief History of Pandemics" (Pandemics Throughout History) by Damir Huremovic.
4. First, infectious diseases are invisible. Secondly, they can easily pass from person to person, and the third is that they are imminent.
5. Scholar at the Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Sassari, Italy.
6. Translated in English as "The Witch of a Plague".
7. A Muslim religious mosque, headquartered in Nizaamudin area of Delhi. The mosque is visited by thousands of people to offer prayers.
8. The Indian government directed all telecom companies to play a pre-recorded caller tune when someone makes a call. The caller tune goes like, "Coronavirus se aaj poora desh lad raha hai, yaad rahe humain beemari se ladna hai, beemar se nahi" translated into English as "The entire country is fighting against Coronavirus, but remember we have to fight the disease, not the patient".
9. Infodemic refers to a sudden flow of information associated with a specific topic that grows exponentially in a short period, generally owing to a particular incident, such as the current pandemic.
10. In an interesting case in India, popular soap manufacturer Reckitt Benckiser (India) Pvt Ltd, which owns the brand Dettol, amidst the Coronavirus outbreak broadcasted an advertisement which indicated that washing hands with soap cakes was an inefficient means to fight disease-causing germs while handwash offered better protection. Later, Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), manufacturing soap and related products under the brand

name "Lifebuoy" contested against Reckitt Benckiser before the High Court of Bombay and contended that the impugned advertisement advocated false claims. Subsequently, Reckitt Benckiser removed the advertisement from the public domain.

11. "Days of Adversity".

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PANDEMIC EXPERIENCES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY

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Abstract. Diplomacy is one of the most prominent parts of statecraft. This research paper illustrates how the COVID-19 situation expands the importance of the incorporation of health issues into diplomatic channels. It also analyzes how the simultaneous interaction of state and non-state actors in global health issues can reduce the danger of pandemic implications rather than a nationalistic approach. Moreover, this analysis underpins how the countries of today's world are more interdependent than ever in terms of politics and economics dealing with trade and business, people's movement, information technology, climate change etc. Though there are theoretical and ideological disagreements in the course of diplomacy and statecraft, modern diplomacy does not avoid health issues as an element of its table of contents. It is relevant to mention that the COVID-19 pandemic spreads to all regions of the world and it is no longer an issue of a particular country. Pandemic is not new in the world, but this case is overwhelming, most rapid and unprecedented. And today's world is more complex than ever. This situation is intertwined with several issues of politics, economics, security etc. Following the qualitative approach based on secondary sources, analyzing the recent and previous cases, examining the duel factors of national and international perspectives, the study finds that the Global Health Diplomacy characterized by cooperation, dialogue, information sharing, capacity building is needed in the battle with a pandemic like COVID-19. It also suggests transparency, accountability and integrity to achieve this goal.

Keywords: global health diplomacy, COVID-19, health crisis

GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY: AN IMPORTANT WING OF MODERN DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy is a long-time practice since human civilization (Nicolson 1988). Though this term refers to several meanings, its

common understanding implies negotiation, communication, dialogue, mediation and interaction (Constantinou 2016). The modern concept of diplomacy incepted after the Enlightenment period denotes the formal practice of state representatives. It was frequently referred to as the conduct of the officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until the 20th century. However, the practice has been updated in the course of increasing interdependencies among states and the role of non-state actors has emerged. Diverse issues have also been included in the list of diplomacy. Trade, security, health, environment, migration, etc. have been added to the discussion. The evolution of diplomatic practice has changed over the years and, in modern-day diplomacy, the health issue is considered as one of the most crucial parts of conducting foreign policy goal (Kickbusch 2007). Gradually, the notion of Global Health Diplomacy has become a relevant phenomenon. Global Health Diplomacy refers to multi-level, multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary cooperation and coordination among state and non-state actors to acquire health security and safety. Kickbusch (2007) illustrated Global Health Diplomacy as "multi-level, multi-actor negotiation processes that shape and manage the global policy environment for health". He also added that "global health diplomacy is a multilateral approach of incorporating health as an integral part and an instrument of foreign policy, to ensure health security across the globe by implementing different policies or actions/agreements negotiated by nation-states" (Kickbusch 2007, 2).

In a functional definition, we can say that:

> Global Health Diplomacy is an emerging field that connects public health with international affairs, management, law, economics and a focus of the negotiation. The concept has currently entered the mainstream diplomacy to an extent, it still falls under three categories: (1) formal negotiations between states; (2) negotiations between states and with non-state actors that might not lead to binding agreements, and; (3) the interactions that take place between public health stakeholders and their counterparts. The formal negotiation, otherwise known as 'core Global Health Diplomacy', accredits

> Health Attaches and other diplomats to link one state's public health institution to another. The negotiation between states and non-state actors, otherwise known as 'multi-stakeholder Global Health Diplomacy', include varied levels of credentials into the discussion to apply the efforts on various levels. The last one is known as 'informal Global Health Diplomacy' which combines the discussion of non-state actors and actors of various institutions to represent and create a set of tools for public health. (Matthew 2014)

The motivation of Global Health Diplomacy comes from the collective concern of broader international society. It does not merely bind the formal interaction among orthodox diplomats; rather it engages multiple stakeholders like scientists, social activists, journalists, researchers, non-government organizations etc. Thus, the importance of Global Health Diplomacy is gaining more and more relevance. Some countries also employed formal health *attaché* in the diplomatic channels, whilst others are also participating via another means of health practitioner, public health specialist etc. The example of Brazil and Switzerland can be prominent in this case. Both emphasized the health issue as the topmost priority in their diplomatic practice. They initiated and coordinated health diplomacy practice with their foreign and health ministry. In 2006, Switzerland commenced a coherent health policy goal enacting "Agreement on Foreign Health Policy Objectives". This initiative underscored a significant change in the traditional diplomatic practice of the Swiss Foreign Policy Department. On the other hand, Brazil's move to consolidate health issues in global policy strategy at the 2001 World Trade Organization conference in Doha, Qatar is notable. This policy mobilized the vision of global health collaboration and strengthened the bond between health and diplomacy to continue its mission on tobacco control (Matthew 2014).

The role of non-state actors is also recognized in many cases. Especially the role of the World Health Organization is notable. WHO helps states create consciousness, provides consultation support and research, disseminates knowledge and information, coordinates policy formation etc. The WHO's contribution to

eradicate smallpox since the 1980 World Health Assembly is one of the prominent success stories of Global Health Diplomacy. WHO also works as a hub of negotiation in health-related policy perspectives ("WHO's Role During", n.d.). Other UN institutions also contribute to Global Health Diplomacy, for example, the International Labour Organization advocates occupational health safety and security. ILO worked together with WHO in the African region to improve occupational health conditions. The experience of their project demonstrates that joint effort and collaborative strategy delegate more outcome than a fragmented approach ("WHO-ILO Joint", n.d.). Besides, the social and humanitarian health education dissemination is also acknowledged by researchers. One of the most renowned health-related philanthropic organizations is Doctors Without Borders. This organization works on research, medication, community engagement etc. Their response to the Ebola crisis was useful to recover the situation. This case also emphasized collaborative research on health emergency ("Ebola: Embed research", 2005).

Though the embodiments of health issues in diplomatic practice get importance, several complexities and challenges are also over there. There are debates on how state and non-state actors will collaborate in this segment, how to maintain transparency and accountability and how to consolidate the public policy goal of different regimes. The question of economic gain from health-related innovation is a big factor. The debate over intellectual property rights, the privacy of information etc. are also emerging factors. Politically, the health discourse is not immune from the nationalistic buzzword ("Why vaccine", 2020). The priority question on health collaboration revolves around it. This is another part of diplomacy indeed. We will explore these aspects in the following section of our study.

THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DYNAMICS OF GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY: AN EVER-LASTING DEBATE

Foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy
Henry Kissinger

International relations underscore various relations of several actors. These relations are explained by several schools of thoughts like classical realism, neo-realism, structural realism, neoclassical realism, liberalism, neo-liberalism, Marxism, neo-Marxism etc (Burchill *et. al.* 2013) As diplomacy is the part and parcel of international relations, such practice is also reflected over there. The prominent quote mentioned above by former US diplomat Henry Kissinger illustrates how national and international dynamics interplay with each other in the arena of international relations.

To understand the dynamics between national and international perspectives of Global Health Diplomacy, we can look forward to observing theoretical explanations. Classical realism advocated by Thomas Hobbes constitutes the international system as anarchy; where states are the primary actor in the system and national interest is the prime goal of a statesman (Burchill *et. al.* 2013). Thus, foreign policy is designated as the extension of domestic policy; as we know Henry Kissinger is one of the most forefront advocates of realism.

The horrifying experience of two World Wars implicated the emergence of the United Nations system, a brainchild of Woodrow Wilson. It realized that realism is not the end of the nation state's purpose. Over time, liberal institutionalism has spread more than ever. Numerous institutions have germinated under the umbrella of the UN system. As the UN charter mandated "promote social progress and better standards of life", these institutions and agencies are motivated to achieve the goals diligently. The World Health Organization, the most prominent institution in global health issue, promised to "act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work". The policy and practice of these institutions are underpinned by liberal institutionalism. This

analytical view advocates that institutions can significantly widen the scope of cooperation and reduce uncertainty. It can be the venue of discussion, collaboration, negotiation, and trust-building (Burchill 2013).

But two factors generated obstacles in achieving global health collaboration: the newly born countries burdened with several problems and the quick escalation of bi-polar rivalry (International Collaboration For, 2016). The war-torn and newly independent countries were in a lower situation on the political system, economic sufficiency and social stability. It was difficult to gain health as a priority issue at this time. On the other hand, the bipolar rivalry between the superpower US and USSR was even inflicted on the health sectors. They vertically emphasized two particular diseases that impeded global health collaboration. While the US emphasized eradicating Malaria, USSR targeted Smallpox. Implications of The Cold War on the health sector uncovered the implicit politics over soft issues. Such kind of politics is visible in the COVID-19 case also. The US-China politics and trade war hinders global public health cooperation. The Trump administration's declaration to withdraw from WHO, the allegation of China's secrecy of information flowing to secure an authoritative regime indicates that the tension between national and international dynamics is still alive.

However, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War led the world to the US-led liberal system. The ideas of openness, liberal economy, democracy were delegated throughout the world. Trade and business spawned, the information and technology sector got rapid growth, people to people connectivity increased. Along with the liberal advocacy of human rights, the safety and security of health are considered an inherent right of the human being (Tobin 2012). Consequently, United Nations initiated the Millennium Development Goal, half of which pertains to health. It also delegates the Sustainable Development Goal, which targets 2030 to achieve its goals. The idea of sustainable development originated from Agenda-21 considers health as broader wellbeing of physical and mental condition. It also propagates societal wellness to achieve

SDG. The SDG goals have been officially adopted by 193 countries (Sustainable Development Goals 2015).

On the other hand, there is another facet of the global North-South debate (Barrett 2016). The debate over responsibility, political fragility, compliance of ethics and the privatization of the medical industry are some of the potential questions that can set back global collaboration on health. The neo-Marxist claim over health inequality was also discussed (McCartney *et. al.* 2019). Mccartney and others explained the inclined discrimination in the sociological process. This study re-examined the Marxist conflict of overproduction and neo-Marxist debate over distribution. Additionally, the criticism of the global distribution of health facilities claims that the health service is actually distributed to the privileged class of society. Moreover, the underdevelopment and poverty in the global south are the results of exploitation by the core, according to Immanuel Wallenstein's *World System Theory*. They also claim that the internationalization of health diplomacy is another tool of the bourgeoisie to capture the means of production.

There is a reflection of these debates in the COVID-19 situation, which has evolved previously in world politics. In today's international system, there are different regimes such as democratic, semi-democratic, authoritarian, semi-authoritarian, hybrid etc. International, regional and global politics are over there. These different regimes have different domestic public policy perception. Among them, some are highly restrictive to information sharing (e.g. China, North Korea). The claim of information secrecy of Chinese authority at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic is discussed (Liu *et. al.*, 2020). The study of Liu Y and Saltman revealed the Chinese authority's public policy priority over economic stability rather than health issue was the first factor that delayed responsive measures earlier. It also demonstrates the technical weakness and the silence of doctors at the initial level because of the government coercive attitude. Lessons from political response to the COVID-19 situation depict the calculation of domestic and international politics. In some countries, there is no domestic mechanism to

regulate ethical issues (Barrett *et. al.* 2016). The bioethics of health practitioners is important. For example, the clinical trial on AIDS in African countries mounted several debates over bioethics. The consent of the population and maintaining the privacy of data were vulnerable in some cases (Barrett *et. al.* 2016).

Moreover, the securitization policy is mostly militaristic in several countries rather than a broader focus on human security (Mustajib 2020). After 9/11, the tectonic event, countries have significantly increased their military expenditures. This study demonstrates that some regions are more pragmatic than others in the development of military expenditures. By contrast, it lowers the government's expenditure on health, education etc. This trend of militaristic securitization underlines the policy priority of statesmen over the last decades. As a result, the argument arises as to how to assemble these national and international policy choices, how to reconstruct these ideological differences. The answer is not straight forward but the process should be normative regarding Global Health Diplomacy considering the lens of liberal institutionalism.

Researchers suggest that though there is a different political interest in health-related services, this policy should be strategized considering collective concerns and contextualizing practice at a macro-level (Signal 1998). Most research findings depict that state-centred policy will not solve the crisis (Bollyky 2020). It will imperil the situation and trigger the spread of the virus more vividly. As today's world is more interdependent than ever, the need for broader collaboration is increased (Mukhisa 2020). COVID-19 no longer remains a country-specific problem; rather it became a "tragedy of commons" (Marco 2020). Yet, without having collaborative research and shared information, the invention of the vaccine and the clinical trial will not be achieved (Mukhisa 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 lesson reveals the weakness of the nation-state in managing health problems (Ruiu 2020). Thus, the claim of the globalist solution in health, climate etc. is getting more vigilance (Colombe 2020).

Global collaboration on health dates back to 1859 when states gathered in International Sanitary Conference to fight common health issues like Yellow Fever, Plague, Smallpox, Diarrhea etc. from a coordinated multilateral platform (Domenico 2020). The theme of this conference was to consolidate the dual goal of diplomacy and health security. Consequently, multilateral forums like the World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, World Health Assembly emerged. Meanwhile, Global Health Diplomacy passed several global health emergencies such as Plague, Yellow Fever, AIDS, Ebola, SARS, and Anthrax etc. The experience of these cases revealed several lessons for us. The need for Global Health Diplomacy, characterized by cooperation, dialogue, information sharing, and capacity building with broader aspects, is the overall recommendation laid out by the researchers. Cooperation among stakeholders should be conducted through a value-based approach, the flow of information should be real-time and the capacity building of health sectors should be conducted focusing on community-level public policy.

Despite the heterogeneous political system, most countries of the world are members of the UN and signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). They are, thus, considered to recognize the right to health security and safety for citizens, as well as for other communities like refugees and minorities. Not only the political discourses but also the scientific discussions admire that without having all communities in consideration of safeguarding global health, eradication of such kind of health emergency can't be achieved (Mukhisa 2020). This inclusion can be achieved through dialogue - a common practice in modern diplomacy. In today's world of advanced communication and technology, the means of dialogue are easier than ever. Real-time communication among stakeholders paves prosperity in dialogue. For instance, the

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the first international health treaty negotiated under WHO, can be a prominent case of multilateral dialogue in global health collaboration. In this convention, tobacco companies tended to divide the North and South, but the dialogue between them facilitated by global civil society cherished the development of policy initiative for all nation-states (Mamudu 2009).

The importance of real-time information flow to initiate a sustainable response was experienced in the case of Ebola and AIDS (Raguin 2018). Real-time information contributes to an early and appropriate response that can reduce economic and public health casualties. In the Ebola crisis of 2014, it would have been difficult to restrict the spread of the virus in other regions if real-time data weren't collected through collaboration in global health research ("Sharing data can", n.d.). The model of European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) to fight off global health plights such as AIDS/HIV, tuberculosis, malaria can be illustrated here**.** EDCTP was established as a public-private partnership between the governments of several European and sub-Saharan African countries. Around 28 countries are full partners of the platform. Among these, 14 are European and 14 are Sub-Saharan countries (Makanga 2017). This platform works to collaborate research and innovation with the support of the European Union. The model demonstrates that global North-South partnership on real-time information sharing in health collaboration is possible.

Global health collaboration should be equipped with accountability to gain sustainable progress. Accountability relates to several issues like setting the role and responsibility of stakeholders, ensuring the accuracy of data, transparency in financial management, equity in the service distribution, assuring compliance etc. Accountability in global health diplomacy involves multi-polar relationships amongst a large number of stakeholders with varying degrees of power and influence, where not all interests are understood in that relationship (Bruen 2014). From in Global

Health Diplomacy perspectives, the development of accountability depends on ensuring the accuracy of information, transparency of data and strengthening financial management.

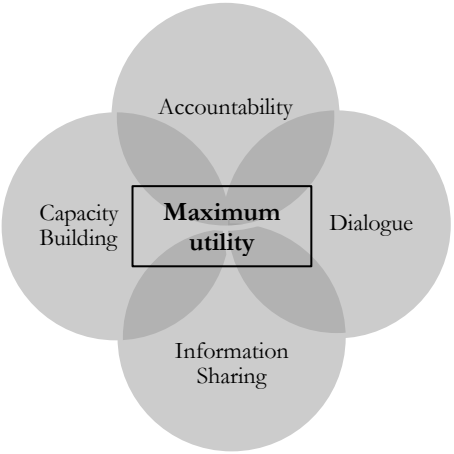

Figure 1. Convergence of four core elements results in maximum utility of GHD. Source: compiled by the authors

Both state and non-state actors are considered in this aspect. For example, the lack of individualized patient charts, poor medical records, inadequate documentation, and insufficient information flows were significant impediments to increasing clinical quality assurance and performance accountability in Albania (Derick 2003). Also, the financial management by non-state actors should be transparent; it can be facilitated by the UN system. On another note, the lack of effectiveness and exertion of Global Health Governance (GHG), a widely used term coined by Dodgson, is somehow notable for the lack of preparedness during hard times (Lee 2014).

Negotiation, information sharing and accountability will enhance capacity building. The idea of capacity building demonstrates the eligibility of community, public authority, national and international institutions to respond to health emergencies effectively and timely. The experiences of global health emergency cases illustrate that

capacity building at the community level which, facilitated by global health collaboration improves the health policy implementation to eradicate health crises. For example, World Health Organization launched the Global Pandemic Influenza Action Plan (GAP), which focuses on the production of vaccines among developing countries and has given a grant to many institutions or companies e.g. Serum Institute of India Limited (SIIL) (Jadhav 2010). Also, to fight off Ebola, Infection prevention and control (IPC) measures were taken to strengthen the capacity of healthcare workers to contain the epidemic and deliver quality services (Oji *et. al.* 2018). This capacity-building activity goes not only in a crisis moment but also continues during normal times to fight off any disease outbreak.

The COVID-19 Situation: Possibilities of Global Health Diplomacy

The COVID-19 pandemic uncovered the weakness of traditional diplomatic practices in solving global health emergencies. During this pandemic, the role of health collaboration in diplomatic practices can prove to be extremely vital. Due to the ever-changing elements of diseases, states cannot resolve these through technical means only; it requires political and economic assistance, negotiation, and solutions. States can thrive better in crippling situations of the healthcare system by addressing the issue, improving health collaboration by means of research, knowledge sharing, information sharing and humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the medical endpoint of a pandemic is not the termination of casualties; the social implications last for a long time (Gina 2020). Therefore, there has been an increase in the priority of Global Health Diplomacy for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, there are varieties of state and non-state actors that are actively involved in shaping global policy for health determination. To coordinate these actors with related aspects like health and business, health and environment, health and security; this domain needs normative recognition. For example, responses from

nongovernmental organizations like The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Jack Ma Foundation in pharmacological substances, kit development, and vaccine generation are crucial (Vervoort 2020). These organizations announced a large financial amount in vaccine invention and did philanthropic activities in Belgium, the USA and some other countries. On the other hand, state actors have also acted in a positive manner towards health collaboration. For example, Swiss hospitals have taken French COVID-19 patients ("Swiss hospitals to", 2020). Also, both Russia and Cuba have supported the Italian healthcare system by sending relief packages. The last has sent 52 doctors and nurses amidst the COVID-19 crisis (Domenico 2020). Solidarity brought hope for states around the globe to restart their relationships under the much-promoted agenda of Global Health Diplomacy to fight off the pandemic. But the questions over state security, the debate over intellectual property, the motivation of business remain over there as we have discussed. A normative Global Health Diplomatic framework can help to quench these questions.

Secondly, this virus has spread rapidly, and it proves that it is in no way limited to a state boundary but affected all nations across the globe. Previous cases of Ebola and SARS were not as overwhelming. The case of COVID-19 is different in terms of transmissibility, clinical severity, infection period and the extent of community spread (Wilder 2020). Thus, it demonstrates the cosmopolitan character of the health threat. For example, while the SARS outbreak in 2003 confirmed about 8000 affected cases and 800 deaths, the COVID-19, within a matter of 2 months since the beginning of the outbreak, had more than 82 000 confirmed cases and more than 2800 deaths. From developed to developing or less developed countries, it spread such rigorously that states become infirm. When some countries initiated collaborative responses, it has become easier to handle the situation. For example, at the very beginning of the COVID-19 situation in Wuhan, Taiwan sent a fact-finding team to China and collected as much information as possible. Soon, they took preventive steps and became successful to

resist severe destruction (Hsieh 2020). The strategy of Taiwan is also a prominent case of responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Their collaborative coordinated policy and quick response are the core lesson of Global Health Diplomacy perspectives. Fortunately, South Korea and Germany followed the strategy of Taiwan and Iceland. Soon, they were able to prevent more casualties. Thus, realizing these examples despite several complexities, the possibility and need of Global Health Diplomacy becomes more relevant than ever (Vervoort 2020).

Conclusion

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty
Winston Churchill

COVID-19 is a big challenge for human beings. It disrupts every single sector of modern human life. This pandemic not only impacts health aspects but also engulfs other economic, social and political ones. Historically, the world faced several health crises, but COVID-19 is rigorously gigantic than others. All crises left numerous lessons for us. As a result, the notion of Global Health Diplomacy developed. But the COVID-19 illustrates that Global Health Diplomacy should be addressed more effectively. The effectiveness of Global Health Diplomacy relies on numerous determinants. This study could not discuss all these but identified some of the important portions. These portions were attributed to analyzing the previous health cases and COVID-19 itself. Though the previous crisis like SARS incepted the need for global health collaboration, the additional lessons of the COVID-19 crisis depict that the world is still inadequately prepared to battle havoc of a tiny virus because of the lack of an appropriate and coordinated framework of Global Health Diplomacy. This framework can be

incorporated by analyzing previous and present cases. All of them demonstrate that dialogue, the flow of information, exchange of knowledge, accountability and capacity building are a must to achieve this goal. Thus, it can be said that the COVID-19 situation reopens an opportunity to realize the need for a more inclusive and integrated Global Health Diplomacy.

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INTANGIBLE SLAVERY AND FREEDOM AT WORK: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

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Abstract. In this paper, I am introducing a distinction in the notion of slavery, as tangible slavery and intangible slavery. Tangible slavery is the notion of slavery in a strong sense, in which slavery is understood as a system based on property law. I am distinguishing tangible slavery from a weak sense of slavery, intangible slavery, which refers to the situations in which an individual continues to work in place despite being dissatisfied with the work. The force to work against one own will is an outcome of complex situational effects generated from both external forces such as working environment, policies, culture, and internal forces like complacency, aversion to taking risks, refusal to explore new possibilities. I have mentioned and emphasized external forces at a minimal level. The focus of the paper is on the reasons related to the individual level, which creates a puzzle about individual freedom. The puzzle is – despite improved work conditions in modern times, why there seems to be a decrease in the level of work satisfaction? The first section of the paper provides an explication of the tangible and intangible distinction, showing the puzzling situation of freedom at the workplace. In the second section, I have presented a historical survey of evolution in the notion of work and freedom. In the third section, I have discussed freedom and liberty and elaborated on the idea of slavery with an example. In the final section, I have tried to formulate an approach from existential philosophy to overcome the puzzling situation of freedom at the workplace.
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Keywords: slavery, freedom, work, existentialism, job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Discussions about the notion of freedom have been a favourite perennial question for philosophers. Two contrastive perspectives,

which sums up the story of both sides of the debate about human freedom are worth starting the paper. On the one hand, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2008, 45) asked a peculiar question about being a free human being and declared, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains. There are some who may believe themselves masters of others and are no less enslaved than they. How has this change come about?" On the other hand, Jean-Paul Sartre (2007, 29), explaining the meaning of humans being condemned to be free without solace or resort to means of justification, said: "That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free: condemned, because he did not create himself, yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does". In this paper, I will situate the debate of man being in chains and man being free in the context of freedom available in the workplace atmosphere of formal set-up. I will argue that the formal structure of a workplace environment creates a puzzling situation for the individual because many times a person feels chained despite being condemned to be free.

In the first section, I will elaborate on the feeling of being in chains by positing a distinction into the concept of slavery, which I am dubbing as tangible and intangible slavery. Tangible slavery is a form of slavery in a strong sense, in which slavery is understood as a system based on property law. I am distinguishing tangible slavery from a weak sense of slavery, intangible slavery, which refers to the situations in which an individual continues to work in place despite being dissatisfied with the work. The force to work against his own will is an outcome of complex situational effects generated from both the external forces such as working environment, policies, culture, and internal forces like complacency, aversion to taking risks, refusal to explore new possibilities. I have mentioned and emphasized external forces at a minimal level. The focus of this paper is on the reasons related to the individual level, which creates a puzzle about individual freedom. The puzzle is – despite improved work conditions in modern times, why there seems to be a decrease in the level of work satisfaction? The first section of the paper

provides an explication of the tangible and intangible distinction, showing the puzzling situation of freedom at the workplace. In the second section, I have presented a historical survey of evolution in the notion of work and freedom. The third section further discusses the concept of freedom in tandem with the thought experiment of the *tale of the slave,* found in the novel *Anarchy, State and Utopia* by Robert Nozick (1974), for connecting the discussion on intangible slavery with the approach to freedom. In the final section, I have tried to formulate an approach from existential philosophy to overcome the puzzling situation of freedom at the workplace.

1. Tangible and Intangible Slavery

Slavery is one of the oldest institutions of human culture. It emerged as soon as people transited from being hunter-gatherer to an agricultural society. The abundance of food and an increase in population paved the way for the institution of slavery, which clutched almost every human civilization from east to west. What I call tangible slavery is synonymous with the formal form of slavery as understood as a system based on property law. According to one of the formal definition of slavery by Laura (2004, 162), **"**slavery is any system in which the principles of property law are applied to people, allowing individuals to own, buy and sell other individuals, as a *de jure* form of property." In Laura's definition of slavery, the term *de jure* refers to legally described practices, irrespective of their existence in reality. *De jure* is often contrasted with *de facto,* which describes the situations existing in reality, even if it is not legally recognized. Tangible slavery, in a formal sense, is a well understood, researched, and known topic, I will not further elaborate on it.

My focus is on the concept of intangible slavery, which falls into *de facto* category. Rather than defining the concept of intangible slavery, I would describe it by situating it into a real-life workplace situation. I attribute the reason for favouring description over definition and explanation of intangible slavery to two famous

quotes of two influential personalities of their respective domains. The first is to be found in the Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wild's Gothic and philosophical novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2008, 187) - "To define is to limit". The second belongs to Ludwig Wittgenstein's revolutionary work *Philosophical Investigation* (1953, 25): "the meaning of a word is its use in the language". Although the context of these quotes is vastly different, they both points to the need for a description of the situation, to understand the meaning of terms rather than solely focusing on the definition and explanation. This much digression for the sake of choosing description over definition enough clarifies the matter at hand.

Moving on to the actual description of the term intangible slavery in a workplace scenario, which goes something like this: one has to submit his documents to an employer; one has signed a bond or contract of employment; one is voiceless in the decision making; one has to bring one's work to home; one is continuously bullied by his superior; sometimes one becomes a victim of sexual abuse; one is denied clothing in his way; one does not get proper rest or recreational service during work; one is given unrealistic targets to achieve; asking for leave is often treated as part of seven deadly sins; one is accused of taking rest during the office time; one has to report every activity even when it is not related to the job; feeling of disheartening and worthlessness at the job; one's feeling of insecurity despite loyalty.

Prima facie, any critic of such descriptions of intangible slavery at the workplace might shrug off them as a description of complaints by a disgruntled ex-employee. However, such descriptions are not an exhaustive list but an attempt to sketch a picture to show how intangible slavery might look like. Unlike tangible slavery, there is no apparent master-slave relationship; no one is being a subject of owing, buying, or selling a person; or is being robbed from their remuneration by unilaterally withdrawing it. I argue that elements present in the formal sense of slavery, *i.e.* tangible slavery has included only the external condition of an individual. This is why there is a need to expand the notion of slavery to cover the inner

state of the individual. I argue that the concept of intangible slavery could serve as such expansion, which attempts to include the internal predicament of an individual in a workplace environment. From an external look, an average office going individual might look happy, clean-shaven, formally dressed, with a nice paycheque and bank balance, paying taxes in time, getting respect from his peers and society. But internally, the individual might be feeling in chains, stretching and crushing him from all sides; feeling the pain of a whip without any mark on the body. Such condition of painful situations that are not visible to the perceptual system but are present nevertheless is what I have been calling intangible slavery. One cannot see or touch it, but only feel it.

At this point, one might suspect my motivation to add unnecessary distinction containing the negatively valenced term *slavery* with not so apparent term *intangible*. The answer to such objection leads to the requirement of an understanding of current work culture, and how the embeddedness of an individual in the work culture impacts the freedom of the individual who is situated in that cultural environment. The point will be clearer with the exploration into how the notion of work evolved.

2. The Evolution of the Notion of Work

I will present a chronological historical account of the various western philosophers and intellectual on their ideas related to work. The aim is to collect fragments of ideas present in different times and places and weave them together to provide a sense in which these scholars conceptualized work. The benefit of such historical exposition is that it will help us connect the idea of intangible slavery with the notion of freedom.

Starting with the mythological and biblical conception of work, according to Christian doctrine when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden for eating the apple, the punishment for defying God's wishes was work, "By the sweat of your brow, you'll

lead your food until you return to the ground" (Genesis 3:19). Work became a distinguishing feature between life in paradise from the life of the actual world. Adam had to work as a punishment until he was 930 years old.

Athens, 335 BCE, Aristotle opened his public school, The Lyceum as a centre for learning for wealthy and cultured Athenians (Lynch 1972, 15-16). Aristotle made some bold claims regarding the nature of work and leisure:

> But leisure seems itself to contain pleasure and happiness and felicity of life. And this is not possessed by the busy but by the leisured; for the busy man busies himself for the sake of some end as not being in his possession, but happiness is an end achieved, which all men think is accompanied by pleasure and not by pain. (Lord 2013, 1338a1)

Aristotle emphasized the difference between *proper* occupation and *noble* leisure in his writings. He proposed leisure not as mere amusement but as a combination of pleasure, happiness, and blessed living (1338a1). He argued that such leisure is not possible for those who are busy in some occupation because occupation aims at a necessary end. So, between work and leisure, the former is extrinsically good and later intrinsically good, as he wrote:

> What one acts or learns for also makes a big difference. For what one does for one's own sake, for the sake of friends, or on account of virtue is not unfree, but someone who does the same thing for others would often be held to be acting like a hired labourer or a slave. (1337b15-20)

Aristotle famous remarked, "there is no leisure for slaves" (1334a20). My interpretation of the point is that Aristotle did not mean the absence of leisure in the sense of tangible slaves. But for the intangible slave as "there is no leisure for slave" in an incomplete quote because the quote from full sentence, "there is no leisure for slave but people unable to face danger bravely are the slaves of their assailants" (1334a20).

Hippo, Roman Africa, 396 AD. After becoming Bishop of Hippo, Saint Augustine, in his sermons on the New Testament, tried to resurrect the notion of work as a result of original sin, "From this cup of sorrow no one may be excused. The cup that Adam has pledged must be drunk" (Brown 2013, sermon 10). He told his audience, many of whom were slaves that the work is always going to be miserable, the only relief is to the next life in God's kingdom. Rome, 1508, the Florentine painter, sculptor, architect, and poet Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Julius the 2nd to begin painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (Sherman 1986, 24-25). He was given complete freedom to design the work and promised a lot of money in return. Michelangelo, along with his fellow Italian genius, Leonardo da Vinci embodied a new approach to work. They worked for money; hiring out their talents to the highest bidders in the courts of Europe but they were not slaves in an intangible sense because they did not work just for the money, they did it for the inherent fulfilment. In the Aristotelian sense, their work became leisure for them. Our modern ideas of work are a lot the Renaissance idea of remunerative creative genius. Our own ambitions are now democratized versions of the aspiration of men like Leonardo and Michelangelo. We too wish to be paid and creative.

Württemberg, Holy Roman Empire, 1520, Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, made a crucial point that one could serve God through the work of many different kinds. Not just as it previously been argued by Catholicism simply by entering the priesthood, "the common work of a servant and handmaiden is more acceptable to God than all the fasting and works of a monk or a priest, when they are done without faith" (Luther 2017, 93). For Luther, God has endowed each one of us with talents that can be used to help another out, which is how work becomes moral. Everyone undertaking essential tasks, he mentioned cleaning, milking, downing, teaching, wears what Luther called the *mask of God,* since God is behind each mask, and mask demonstrates God's love (Forde 1972, 40-42). Work, for Luther, is, therefore, the best means to employ the doctrine of *loving thy neighbour*. Protestantism

is responsible for a momentous re-evaluation of the worth and dignity of ordinary labour. Similar praises for ordinary work blossomed in Paris, France 1750. Diderot and d'Alembert published the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, which sets out to cover each and every branch of human work there is (d'Alembert, Jean Le Rond, 1995). The Encyclopédie is filled with admiration for ordinary work as of farmers, bell-makers, locksmiths, cloth weaver, bankers, so on and so forth. It is the longest illustrated poem in praise of ordinary work ever written. It had a huge impact on how people perceive the prestige of work.

Paris, France, 1844, the exiled Karl Marx finished his series of notes as *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. These notes are on capitalism, containing some of his most interesting thinking about work. He attacked capitalism not because workers did not get paid enough or were exploited but for a more interesting reason: because too often, their work becomes boring, which is the true problem (Marks and Engels 2009). Marx, who worked twelve hours a day on most days, was no enemy of work. What infuriated him about capitalism is that it seems to prevent people from enjoying their work, enjoying it as much he enjoyed his. The reason for Marx is that capitalism encourages the production of goods, disconnected from the talents and aspirations of the workers. That is what he so desperately wished to correct. Communism for Marx was not a project for getting rid of work, but about making work more enjoyable.

University of Chicago, 1899, Norwegian - American economist and sociologist, Thorstein Veblen, published his first book–*The Theory of the Leisure Class*. He argued that, as soon as people make it in society, they try to show superiority by displaying signs of what leisurely and idle people they are:

> Conspicuous abstention from labour, therefore, becomes the conventional mark of superior pecuniary achievement and the conventional index of reputability; and conversely, since application to productive labour is a mark of poverty and subjection, it becomes inconsistent with a reputable standing in the community. (Veblen 2007, 30)

Veblen very clearly captured an idea of being the upper class that was about to die forever. He well may have been right for his own time, but everything was about to change. Within a few decades, everyone fell prey to a new cult: the cult of working hard and being very busy all the time. Soon, only the unemployed were considered idle people. Everyone started working away furiously. The richer one is, the more one keeps working to show that one is good and serious. Being idle became a new taboo. With work newly prestigious, one of the major challenges of societies became that of correctly mining the talents of everyone, and helping them to find their way into the right job, that is the jobs which will fulfil them and make them money as well. USA, 1945, Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers ran the first Briggs-Myers Indicator Test (Block 2018). The test developed throughout the second world war indicated personality types and tried to pair people out with ideal jobs. The test used 93 questions to figure out which one of four main personality type a person might be– Introvert-Extrovert (I-E), Thinking-Feeling (T-F), Sensing-Intuition (S-N), Judging-Perceiving (J-P) (Myers 1962). For example, an introvert will enjoy thinking and working alone in small peaceful groups and will be suited to work as an accountant, a dentist, or a librarian; an extrovert will enjoy action-dominated, high-octane work, and might go for acting, salesmanship, or trading in financial institutions. The goal for Briggs and Myers was to find the type that suits one best; work for them was about making the correct lifestyle choice that suited one's personality. It was not about arbitrary aims, such as money.

In the USA, on January 22, 1984, Apple Computers launched the only national airing of its famous 1984 advert during the halftime commercials of the Super Bowl (Hertzfeld 2004, 73). The 60-second advert sees a heroine, dressed in bright running gear, saving the army of soulless workers from the conformity of standardized work, by destroying the Big Brother-like leader. It was an idea as old as the Renaissance: there is good work and bad work, and the good work is creative kind, except now, unlike in Michelangelo's day, thanks to

technology, this is for everyone. The advert carried the famous tagline: You'll see why 1984 won't be like "1984" (Hertzfeld 2004, 73). The advert underlined the liberating colourful and energetic Mac as a deliverance from the technophobic drudgery of industrial labour. The future of work is going to be fun, original, and expressive in Apple's hand.

Apple's advert could be seen as an exemplar for the emergence of celebrated terms associated with the notion of work in modern times, such as efficiency and effectiveness, throat cut completion, strategic work planning, time management, work at home, flexible timings, job specifications, job responsibilities, job engineering, job rotation, promotion, 360 appraisal, corporate culture, corporate retreat, perks and incentives, training and development, career growth, workaholic, profit, outsourcing, bonus, so on so forth. These positively valenced words colour a beautiful picture in mind about the corporate world, where people are dedicated to their work, they reside in the fair and just system in which they are treated equally and get their share of benefit according to work performed by them. They mostly perform white colour jobs and seem to be the happiest creatures of planet earth. How can one think of any kind of slavery in this utopian corporate setting, about this paradise on earth? For millions of the unemployed or the unhappily employed, the dream has not turned out to be so easy. It can be doubly painful when one is meant to having such fun at work to find no work at all, or work that does not fulfil one's soul. The modern world has made the career crisis one of the central difficulties of existence. People have been asking so much about their working lives. So no wonder they sometimes don't deliver against the expectations that people now have of them. Too often, jobs are closer to the toil of Adam than the life-enhancing creativity of Michelangelo. That remains the challenge for the future of work. To illustrate this challenge properly, in the next section I will dig into the notion of freedom.

3. WHAT MAKES US FREE?

The answer to the question of intangible slavery in the utopian corporate setup lies in the notion of freedom. Depending upon the context, the term freedom has many connotations. In philosophy and religion, the idea of freedom is closely connected with the concept of liberty. Freedom and liberty, both are identified with free will without undue constraints. According to Hayek (2013, 21), "Freedom is also traditionally understood as the independence of the arbitrary will of another." State of freedom is contradicted with slavery because a slave must continuously succumb to the will of others. On the other hand, a free person has no obligation to follow the will of others; she can choose what to do, what not to do, as far as she is not encroaching into the freedom of others. One of the comprehensive ways to grasp the concept of freedom is with positive and negative liberty demarcation of freedom as proposed by British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1958) in his classic essay of *Two Concepts of Liberty*:

> I shall call the 'negative' sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What is the area within which the subject - a person or group of persons - is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?' The second, which I shall call the 'positive' sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What, or who is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?' (Berlin 1958, 2)

In the context of the workplace, the worker is free to the degree to which no one interferes with her work. Freedom to work in this sense is the area within which a worker can perform his task unobstructed by others. If the worker is prevented by others from doing what she could otherwise do, she is to that degree not free; and if this area is invaded by others beyond a certain minimum, she can be described as being coerced, or enslaved. This kind of enslavement is what I have been calling intangible slavery. An increase in negative freedom implies a reduction in the restriction of

the possible action of an agent. I argue that intangible slavery results from the misuse of a positive sense of freedom. The argument of positive freedom for workers goes like this:

1. Humans are rational beings; they can do what they with their own.
2. The nature of work and job is designed and directed by rational minds, towards rational goals such as profit maximization.

Therefore, rational beings would necessarily be aligned with methods and procedures adopts for the goal, wishing against them would be irrational.

The argument of positive freedom is inspired by the proposed metaphysical heart of rationalism by Berln (1958, 15) as "To want necessary laws to be other than they are is to be prey to an irrational desire - a desire that what must be X should also be not-X." The positive rational freedom for workers would entail that they should assimilate the substances of work atmosphere and culture of whatever place they are working on as children assimilate the laws of logic or mathematics even without understanding them because they will later realize the rationality of such laws that are governed by reason. The idea of intangible slavery gets attached with positive freedom not because it cannot make workers happier by manipulating them but due to its ability to rob the human essence by treating them as objects or means to some goal not as an end in themselves. Such treatment denies the freedom of workers, even with all the good intentions of occupiers; the benevolent owners try to mould the culture and environment of an organization according to the goals it aims to achieve. Such goal-driven strategy and mindset give birth to the intangible form of slavery in an organization. In the past, socialized forms of positive view freedom had resulted in the form of totalitarian, nationalist, communist, authoritarian structure. The danger of such tendencies looms over in our modern-day work as well but under the cloth of advancement. Berlin considered both concepts as a representation of human ideals but warned about the susceptibility of the positive concept of freedom to social-political abuse.

To have a better understanding, how intangible slavery could fit in today's mostly democratic world, thought experiment, *Tale of the Slave*, by Robbert Nozick (2013, 269-270), in his award-winning novel *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* could be of great assistance. In the tale, he invites us to imagine ourselves as slaves. There are nine stages in the tale. In the first stage, you as a slave are totally at the mercy of your brutal master, he can beat you at any time as per his whims, you are subject to all the cruelty, you are not allowed to take rest, you cannot go anywhere, you have to complete all the work given by your master, you cannot raise any objection to his decisions, he can treat you as an object of his desire. In the second stage, your master becomes a bit kinder, he will not beat to according to his whims but will beat you when you break the rule, he will even provide you some time off from work. In the third stage, now he has a group of slaves while distributing things, the master takes into account the need, merit, talent, of the slaves according to the principles acceptable to all you. In the fourth stage, you are even granted to work only three days; the rest four days are your own, you can do whatever you want to do in those four days. In stage five, the master allows the slave to work outside wherever they wish to work for wages but on one condition; that they will have to give three-seventh of their wages to the master, the master also retains the right to recall the slaves in case of emergency and also prohibits the slave to participate in any dangerous activity that will damage the effectiveness and efficiency of the slave, like cigarette smoking and mountain climbing. At any time, the master can also increase or decrease the share of wage from your end to him. In stage six, there is a change, suppose the master has approximately a thousand slaves who now have become your master too, all the 10000 slaves except you are allowed to vote on decisions concerning the distribution and usage of income earned by you and all other people, they can also jointly decide the legitimacy of your activities, with the power of voting. In stage seven, although you don't have the power to vote, you are given the liberty to persuade another 10000 in favour of policies that you want to be

implemented. To persuade others, you are also allowed to participate in discussions concerning policy matters. In stage eight, taking into consideration of your efforts, you are granted the right to vote but with one caveat that your will mark your vote only if a tie occurs, on that issue your vote will be opened and considered, no tie has ever occurred yet, your ballot has never been opened yet. In the final ninth stage, you are fully granted the right to vote with them with all 10000 people, but like in stage eight, your vote will carry the issue only if a tie occurs.

At the end of his thought experiment, Nozick asks a baffling question directed to reader, "The question is: which transition from case 1 to case 9 made it no longer the tale of a slave?" (269). Through his though experiment Nozick wanted to speculate on how a minimal state might have risen without overtly violating right of the people, "through a series of individual steps each arguably unobjectionable has placed us in a better position to focus upon and ponder the essential nature of such a state and its fundamental mode of relationship among persons" (269). As an analogical account *Tale of the Slave*, provide crucial insight into how the changes might have occurred in the tangible slavery implicitly paving the way for the intangible slavery. In the discussion on evolution of notion of work, I tried to argue that despite things appeared to be changing for the better, but the underlying goal remained same, to squeeze the slave to get most of him, but the means to get this done got so much changed that we even got estranged from human aspect of ourselves and became the robots in terms of efficiency and productivity. So, the answer to the title of section *What makes us free?* lies in the words of Dostoevsky (2014, 221), who tried to sum up whole meaning of human life in one statement, "man only exists for the purpose of proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not an organ-stop". Complaining about overlooking one most precious value above all values, he pointed out that all sages, lovers of human with the help of statistician can make the list of positive human values like peace, freedom, prosperity, wealth and so on so forth, and take average through statistical figures relying on scientific and economic

formulae, but they all tend to forget on the value that is of *free choice,* what makes a human real human, and puts it different from "twice-two-make-four" (223). Whenever this value of free choice is jeopardized, it will always lead to some form of slavery. At workplace setup, denying free choice leads to intangible slavery.

4. Existential Approach to Deal with the Puzzle of Workplace Freedom

Throughout the paper, I tried to present a contrast between the functioning of an organization and job satisfaction by workers, which often led to puzzling questions. The puzzle, I wanted to foreshadow in the paper is this: despite improved work conditions in modern times, why there is an increase in the level of work satisfaction? The puzzle can be dealt with from two perspective– one global organizational, and two locally from an individual perspective. In the paper, I am considering the attempt to deal with the puzzle from the perspective of an individual. Because the puzzle presents a kind of existential crisis to one's life, I would primarily reply to the insights present in existential philosophers to deal with the puzzle.

A critic reading this paper might suspect that I have deliberately painted a gruesome picture of the workplace clothed into the discussion on the freedom to make a case for the presence of intangible slavery. They might be right to some extent, given how so many people seem to enjoy their work, enjoying to the extent that there has been a boom in the entrepreneurial mindset. More people have started taking the risk of starting their own startups than ever before. They are taking huge risks for getting autonomy. However, at a closer look, are these instances not the proof that people, fed up with the intangible slavery, want to exercise their spirit of free choice to do what they think suits best to them? The puzzle also points towards one more dilemma of work: On one hand, it is hard

for one to survive if one does not have a job, and on the other hand, if one gets the job but is not satisfied with it; what is the way out?

The central proposition of Existentialism, *existence precedes essence* is a good starting point to deal with the puzzle (Sartre, 1985, 345). The celebrated slogan of existentialism means that the consideration of the *existence* of an individual, i.e., recognizing the individual as an independent, acting, responsible being, before assigning *essence,* i.e., trying to fit the individual in various preconceived labels, roles, definitions, and stereotypes. It also implies that an individual cannot be pinned down a particular job. Another critical aspect of an individual is acceptance and recognition of what Heidegger (1996, 135-136) called *thrownness*, "An entity of the character of Dasein is its there in such a way that, whether explicitly or not, it finds itself in its thrownness." People are thrown into a particular and narrow social milieu, surrounded by rigid attitudes, archaic prejudices, and practical necessities, not of their own making. However, in the Heideggerian sense, thrownness is not a limiting deterministic way of life but an indicator of being thrown into the world of possibilities. He wanted to bring forth the *facticity* of being born in a concrete historical situation. Sartre (2003, 649-656), has also used the term *facticity*, as a limitation and condition of freedom. In the conception of limitation, facticity tells about the things one was not free to choose such as birthplace, parents; as a condition of freedom is acceptance of facticity and creating one's own values for oneself. There is a critical distinction between the conception of facticity by Heidegger and Sartre. For Heidegger, the emphasis of drawing freedom from the possibilities of *thownness* into a historical situation, for Sartre such possibilities undermine the choice. The question is how one *transcends* from the facticity and *throwness* of one's situation? The answer lies in another existential concept of *authenticity*. Heidegger suggested the answer to living an authentic life, moving from *they-self* to *our-selves*. They-self is surrendering one's self to a socialized, superficial mode of living. Our-self is a mode of living according to one's own free choice. Sartre considered living in *bad faith* as an inauthentic mode of living; where bad faith is telling

oneself that things have to be a certain way and shutting one's eye to other options. Sartrean authentic living is the exercise of freedom which humans are condemned. Behind all these concepts and jargons of existential philosophy lies a simple call to the human being, an ancient aphorism–*know thyself*.

After the overview of some of the core concept of existential philosophy, it is time to apply insights from the existential thinker to the puzzle of freedom at the workplace. Imagine a person, let us call the person John, who always complains of feeling trapped in his job, blaming to an external factor such as I cannot leave my job and pursue my interest because I have a family dependent on me; my superior is a terrible person, and has become a hurdle in my career growth; I am born in a poor family, I cannot do what my heart desires; economic, social, and political condition of my country is not such that I can aspire to dream big; my fate is predestined; Whatever is happening to me is because of greater purpose designed by God almighty. John feels invisible shackles around him while going to his job, like a slave, an *intangible slave*. The question is, who is responsible for the condition of John. The answer to the question cannot be provided in a binary fashion by blaming either John or the organization in which he is working. John, like all human being, is a situated person in the world. Situatedness implies the interaction between organism and environment both. In the workplace situation, the creature is John and the environment in the organization. I would only focus on the individual John because environmental conditions are beyond the purpose and scope of this paper.

The existential answer to the condition of John is that neither his boss, family, company, society, government, fate, greater purpose nor God, is responsible for his self-imposed form of intangible slavery. Blaming his *throwness* and facticity, John refuses to recognize that he is condemned to being a free creature because he is living in bad faith, refusing the see other alternatives. The bad faith of John stems from sparing himself from short term pain of losing the job but suffering from a long-term psychological impoverishment in the

form of intangible slavery. Due to bad faith, John insists that he has to a particular kind of job, limiting himself to the definition of his job rather than a free creature. However, one cannot be too harsh with John because he has closed his mind to other possibilities. After all, the path to knowing *thy-work* and *thy-freedom at work* is often uncharted territory for the individual. There are no easy answers available even within the billions of search results of Google; no God to whisper the solution into your ears; no celestial announcement from the sky to enlighten one about oneself. The work takes a lions' share of one's adult life, figuring out the job which would fulfil one's choice as a free individual is not going to be easy. It is up to the individual to discover her own path. Existentialist philosophy does not provide a path but provides some suggestions like one need to start listening to one's own self about one's passions and interests which is close to one's free choice; one would have to explore many options before them. Existential philosophers never suggested that search for meaning in life is going to be an easy task. One would stumble many times, frustrated on the time and energy wasted on the endeavours of exploration. One shall not stop until she solves the puzzle by working as a free individual to the job that makes one feel satisfied. End and means to the path might differ from person to person according to one's own expression of individuality: one might feel fulfilled in making codes and program for software; some might feel fulfilled in painting; some in teaching; others, some in managing companies; some in running non-government organizations; some in travelling; in mountain climbing; so on so forth. But one would sometimes have to *leap of faith* in Kierkegaardian sense, without thinking much about the set pattern of the society, government, and other-selves.

CONCLUSION

The distinction between the two conceptions of slavery, tangible and intangible, is an apt way to make sense of angst, as felt by human

beings due to not exercising freedom in matters of work. The distinction was not introduced to make any metaphysical or ontological claims but to find a way to express the inner state of a person whose dissatisfaction primarily lies in the obstruction of freedom by external or internal forces. To make the notion of intangible slavery clearer, I presented a historical survey of influential ideas regarding work, extract from a series of writings of prominent scholars. Any discussion about the forms of slavery is incomplete without a focus on the concept of freedom. By analyzing Berlin's *two concepts of liberty*, it emerged that freedom, in a negative sense, along with the respect for the pluralism of human values and goals is a truer and more humane ideal than the ideal of freedom in the positive sense, which might cause the danger of authoritarianism. With pieces of help from Nozick's *Tale of the Slave*, the answer to *what makes us free?* came to reside in free choices in matters related to oneself. I tried to frame the question of dissatisfaction with the work despite improved conditions as a puzzle and presented an individualistic approach to deal with this puzzle from the perspective of existential philosophy. Thus, from an existential point of view, one has first to realize his "thrownness" and the facticity of human existence, then coming out from the bad faith and exercising choices as a free human individual by exploring his various possibility to search and give meaning to work and life.

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