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## Table of Contents

*Editorial*

### Research Articles

Verbs of Motion in English: A Componential Analysis <b>Dr. A. Shobha Rani</b>	<b>3</b>
Concerning Feminine Identity in Eugene O'Neill's <i>Long Day's Journey into Night</i>	
<b>Dr C. Lalnunhlui</b>	<b>16</b>
Challenging Imperial Ideas: (Re) evaluating 1943 Bengal Famine as Man-Made Holocaust	
<b>Dr. Utsarga Ghosh</b>	<b>23</b>
Dystopias and Control Apparatus: A Reading of George Orwell's <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>	
<b>Anik Sarkar</b>	<b>31</b>
The Tussle between the Society and the Artist, Mezghebe through Ideas in Haile's <i>Is He Mad?</i>	
<b>Desbele Teckle Tesfamariam</b>	<b>39</b>

### Poems

A Burning World	<b>Tania Alphonsa George</b>	<b>50</b>
The Escape	<b>Shristi Raturi</b>	<b>51</b>
The Fallen Angel	<b>Dr A. Raihana Barvin</b>	<b>52</b>

### Fiction

Sojourn	<b>Sheena Sarah Winny</b>	<b>54</b>
---------	---------------------------	-----------

<b>Our Esteemed Contributors</b>	<b>58</b>
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## **Editorial**

The January 2023 issue of GNOSIS had a very warm response from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder or this issue even before the deadline of 10 December 2022. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted. As a journal committed to quality research and writing, we are aware of the need to delink quality from publication cost. Hence, our decision is to charge no publication fee from the scholars whose papers will be published in the issues of GNOSIS. At the same time since GNOSIS is a self-financed venture, co-operation and support in the form of subscriptions are solicited from the readers and admirers of English Literature and Language from all over the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the Academicians and well-wishers of GNOSIS who recommended GNOSIS for publication. This issue has five research/critical articles, three poems and one fiction. Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our esteemed members of the Board of Advisors and Review Editors for their selfless and tiresome efforts in assessing the articles very sincerely and giving their valuable remarks to bring out this issue in such a grand manner. I am also grateful to the revered contributors who have made this issue of the Journal a beautiful reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast. Happy Reading!

**Dr. Saikat Banerjee**

Editor

## Verbs of Motion in English: A Componential Analysis

Dr. A. Shobha Rani

*Submitted 19/11/2022 Revised 19/11/2022 Accepted 19/01/2023, Published 31/01/2023*

**Abstract:** In modern linguistics, the study of meaning or semantics has remained less developed compared with the advances made in the studies of phonology and syntax. For instance, right from Leonard Bloomfield to Noam Chomsky, modern Linguists have set aside the study of semantics in preference to their investigations into the phonology and syntax of language. Linguists like Lakoff, Ross, Fillmore, McCauley, Halliday, Pike, S. Lamb etc. have attempted to include the study of meaning in the models of language they forwarded. Thus, the study of meaning in language structure has remained a desideratum. An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse the different shades of meaning across, the most frequently used verbs of motion in English which constitute a single semantic field. The concept of semantic field is explained and illustrated, followed by an explanation of the process of componential analysis employed to decompose the meaning of different member verbs in the semantic field of verbs of motion in English. Finally, the implications for English language teaching are also explained and illustrated.

**Keywords:** Verbs, Motion, Analysis, linguistics, Action

### Introduction

Modern linguists have conceived the primary function of grammar is to relate sound and meaning and to show how meaning or conceptual world is transformed into utterances or sentences in language. Different theories of grammar and language models have been forwarded to fulfill this goal of grammar. However, the demarcation between semantics and syntax has not been well established because the internal structures of meanings imply certain syntactic properties which should be given proper representation in the grammatical model. For example syntactically indexed arguments of a verb denote the required or acceptable noun phrases and their syntactic function. Furthermore, the selection restrictions impose additional conditions on these co-constituents. Therefore, an essential part of the syntactic behaviour of the lexical element has to be derived directly from its semantic representation.

Even, the syntactic deep structure representation is directly dependent on its semantic structures. It is in this sense that the approach of Generative Grammar seems to be acceptable (as opposed to Chomskyan Generative Transformational Grammar) because this model of language recognizes no other deep structure than the semantic structure on which transformations operate to derive the surface structure, and not on the deep syntactic structure. Lakoff, Ross, Fillmore and McCawley have shown that there is no need to setup an artificial intermediate level, viz. the syntactic deep structure. “It is an artificial intermediate level between the empirically discoverable ‘Semantic deep structure’, a level the properties of which have more to do with the methodological commitments of grammarians than with the nature of human languages.” (Fillmore 1968: 88) “If the level of structure to which transformations can be most simply applied... has no systematic interconnections with any other facts of language, there does not seem to be any valid motivation for using the level ‘deep structure’ for it.” (Lakoff and Ross, 1967:63) Similarly, “The semantic and syntactic systems of a language comprise the principles that relate conceptual structures and surface structures. For every sentence of a language, these principles specify the relationship between its form as a string of morpheme and its conceptual import” (Langacker, 1968:89) In the same vein Chafe (1970) argues that the ‘ideas’ exists before and outside of and independently of a language. Chafe maintains that ideas or concepts are real entities in people’s minds, having some physical, electrochemical reality in the human nervous system. The fact that semantics or the study of meaning is an indispensable part of any linguistic investigation has become fully established. However, in modern linguistics the study of meaning or semantics has remained less developed in contrast with the studies of phonology and syntax. Yet linguists have made significant studies in semantics. Two major contributions may be noted in this context. They are a) Semantic fields b) Componential analysis of meaning.

## **VERBS OF MOTION**

### Process:

Verbs of Motion indicate any kind of movement as opposed to standstill or resting position. Motion is basically physical and its other implied or figurative meanings are instances of extension of meaning. The process expressed by a Motion verb requires at least one participant. The participant may be Human or Non-human, Animate or Inanimate. The term Agent stands for the performer of a particular action denoted by a verb and the term patient for the affected. The term participant implied both and its reference is to the process concerned.

### **Componential Features**

The process involved in motion may be described as movement from one point to another in space; within or around one and the same point of space or with reference to a single point of space. That is, motion implies the presence or absence of a certain Direction which may be of different kinds. To define

Direction, a particular spatial point is taken as Reference. This Reference may be Goal - oriented (+Goal) or participant-oriented (-Goal). +Goal includes the speaker's or hearer's standpoint while -Goal refers to that of the participant (Agent/Patient). Another Component is Mode of motion. It may be, for instance, Swift or Slow or neither swift nor slow. The verb 'run' is marked for swiftness whereas the verb 'crawl' is marked for 'slowness' while the verb 'move' is unmarked for either. Thus, the componential features of the verbs of motion are as follows:

Reference may be marked or unmarked. If it is marked, it may refer to the Goal (+Goal) or may not (-Goal). +Goal comprises the features speaker and hearer; either of them may be specified + or -. If Goal is marked +speaker, it means the Reference is in terms of the speaker's point of view. If it is marked +Hearer, the Reference is to the Hearer's point of view. If a verb is marked -Goal, the Reference is neither to the speaker nor to the Hearer, but to the participant.

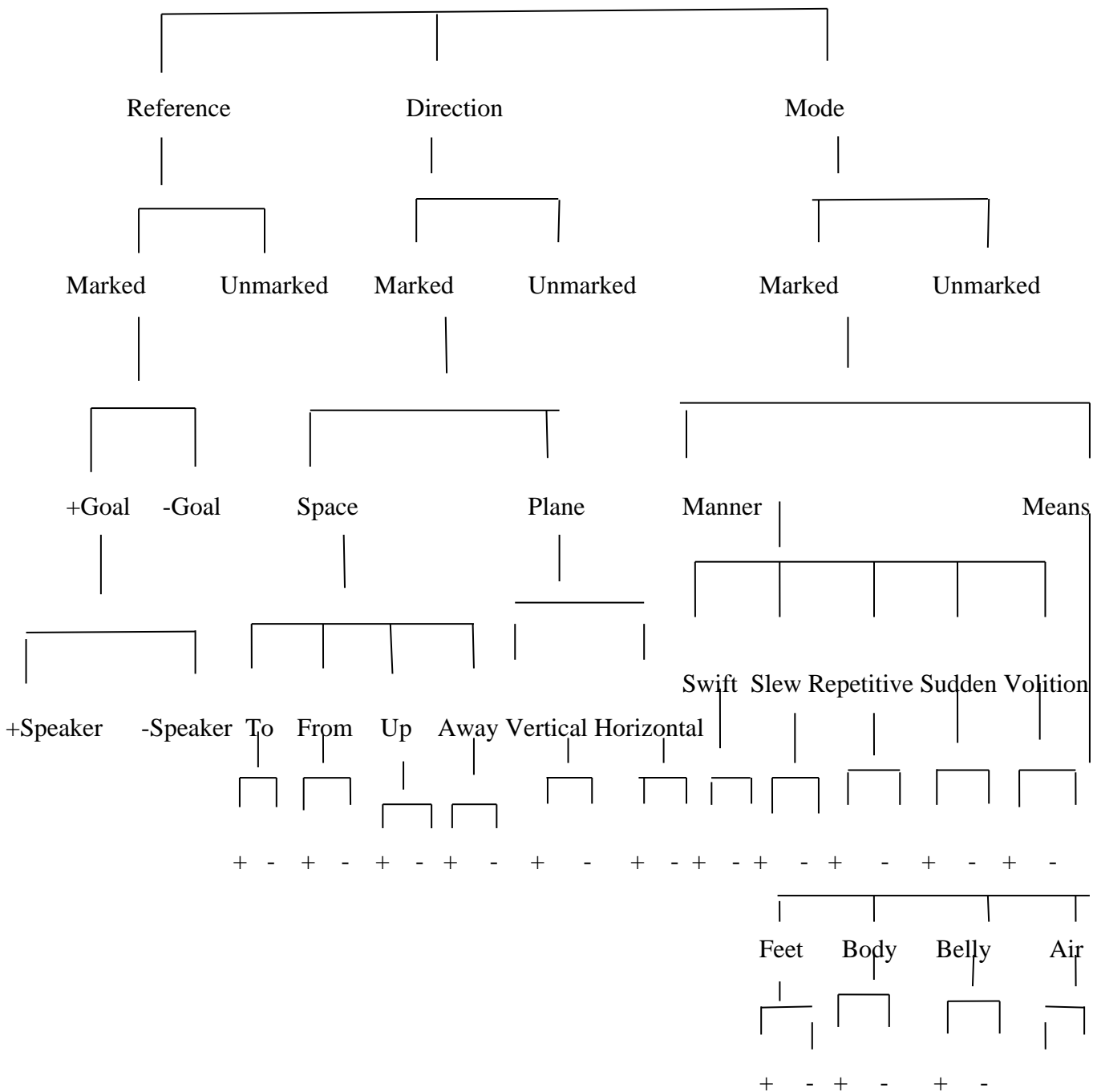
Direction is mostly dependent upon Reference. It may be marked or unmarked. It is marked either for space or for plane. Space comprises the features To, From, Up and Away each of which, in turn, may be + or -. Plane includes the features vertical (+ or -) and Horizontal (+ or -).

Mode refers to the kind of movement. It is either marked or unmarked. It is either marked or unmarked. It is marked for Manner and Means. Manner comprises the features swift, slow, repetitive, sudden and volition, each of which may be either + or -. Means covers the features Foot, Body, Belly, and Air. Each of these features may be + or -.

Each of the verbs of motion carries all this information. That is, information about the agent, about the agent-patient relationship if there is a patient, about the spatial point of reference, about the spatial direction and about the spatial direction and about the mode of motion. The semantic description of a motion verb has to present this information as opposed to that of the other motion verbs.

In the componential feature specification of a verb only those features which distinguish it from the others ('Minimal features') are included. Fig 1 presents a diagrammatic relationship of these componential features.

Concrete 'Abstract'





The Verbs:

Go	Climb	Fly	Move	Come	Jump	Crawl
Leave	Hop	Creep	Walk	Trot	Rise	Run
Gallop	Fall					

Contrasts

Go v Come v Leave

Go and Come are logically antonyms while leave and Go are synonyms. A comparison and contrast will throw light on their semantic composition. Consider the following sentences.

1. He has gone to China.
- 1a. He has come to China.
- \*1b. He has left to China.
- 1c. He has left for China.

'He is now in China, or on his way to China' will be a paraphrase of (1) but (1a) cannot be its paraphrase. (1c) can be a paraphrase of (1) with a slight change of stress in meaning. (1c) is different from (1) in the sense that it lays emphasis not on the Goal (China), but on the place that the participant has left. In fact (1c) is a contraction of (1d).

- 1d. He has left (England/India/America) for China.

This kind of expansion is not possible with 1. 1b is not unacceptable syntactically for this reason. 1a gives a different meaning altogether in that it specifies the reference. There, it is implied that the speaker identifies himself with China and the participant also has come to China. In 1 and 1c there is no such reference as to the speaker's situation.

2. Shall we go by train or by steamer?
- 2a. Shall we leave by train or by steamer?
- 2b. Shall we come by train or by steamer?

2 does not make any spatial reference while in 2a. 'leave' implies 'leave the place where the speaker and the hearer are present.

3. I must be going now

3a. I must be leaving now

\*3b. I must be coming now

3c. he must be coming now

3b is semantically anomalous because 'come' implies 'here' or –Away and also it is Goal-oriented in reference. That is, somebody or something other than the speaker 'comes to the place where the speaker is', but not the speaker himself. Therefore 3b is semantically unacceptable. The difference between 3 and 3a is similar to that in 1 and 1d.

4. I wish this pain would go.

4a. I wish this pain would leave me.

\*4b. I wish this pain would come.

4 and 4a are synonymous. Here, their difference is rather syntactic than semantic. Leave, being both transitive and intransitive, syntactically requires an object in this context. Also Go in 4 does not imply any physical motion, but implies disappearance of pain or healing.

The syntactic difference between Go and Leave is, too partly semantic. Go does not allow a 'place object' whereas Leave allows one.

4b is semantically anomalous because a person is likely to wish for the good things in his favour but not the unpleasant states such as pain. Since Come implies 'near' or –Away a person is unlikely to wish for any pain to come near and in fact itself upon him. Secondly, Come has a restricted semantic range; Go, on the other hand, is flexible and covers a wide semantic range. One can say

5. It goes without saying.

But not

\*5a. It comes without saying.

Nevertheless, Go cannot occur at all places where Come does.

Compare 6 and 6a.

6. Be coming. ('I request you to come here often)

6a/ Be going.

7. Go away!

\*7a. Leave away!

7b. Come away!

7a is semantically irregular and therefore syntactically impossible because Leave includes the features +Away, +From in its semantic composition and does not allow ‘away’ again syntactically. 7b is semantically different from 7 because come is marked for the referential component whereas Go is unmarked for reference.

8. Winter has gone and spring is here.

\*8a. Winter has left and spring is here.

\*8b. Winter has come and spring is here.

In 8 ‘has gone’ mean ‘ended’. 8a is not acceptable because Leave is marked for reference, +participant. 8b is semantically anomalous being self-contradictory.

9. Don’t go doing that!

10. He went red with anger.

11. Fish soon goes bad in hot weather.

12. Tiverton went Liberal at the by-election.

13. When did America go dry?

In the sentences above Go conveys meanings which are idiomatic or figurative or extensional in nature. Come and Leave cannot express these meanings.

These three verbs take an Agent marked Animate (i.e. +Animate or –Animate).

Thus the following feature configurations will account for the semantic difference between Go, Come and Leave.

Go	Come	Leave
U Ref	M Ref (+Goal)	M Ref (-Goal)
M Dir (+Away)	M Dir (-Away)	M Dir (+Away, +From)
U Mode	U Mode	U Mode
( Animate Agent)	( Animate Agent)	( Animate Agent)

### Walk V Run

Walk is marked –Swift and –Slow in mode whereas Run is marked for swiftness (+Swift). Walk is restricted in meaning and cannot be substituted for Run whereas the converse is possible with difference of meaning. Compare the following sentences.

14. We walked three miles.

15. We ran three miles.

16. How old are the babies when they learn to walk?

17. he was walking up and down the station platform.

16a. How old are the babies when they learn to ru?

17 a. He was running up and down the station platform.

The sentences with Run, 15, 16a, 17a may be rare but they are not unacceptable either semantically or syntactically. However, Walk can replace Run in a few instances syntactically, but with a change of meaning.

18. I can't run fast.

18a. I can't walk fast.

19. The children walked out to see what was happening.

\*19a. The children walked out to see what was happening.

19a is semantically anomalous, because walk expresses an idiomatic meaning, 'walk out' being a phrasal verb. Thus 20 is acceptable.

20. The men in the factory walked out yesterday.

20a. She came running towards me.

20b. She came walking towards me. (rare)

21. She ran to meet us.

\*21a. She walked to meet us.

Walk is syntactically similar to 'Run' but semantically different.

22. Horses should be walked for a while after a race.

23. He walked his horse up the ill.

24. He put his arm round me and walked me off.

25. You will walk me off my feet.

As a causative verb Walk means 'cause or make somebody or some animal like horse walk'. It also implies that the patient is not physically normal or sound as illustrated in 22 to 25. Run, on the other hand, as a causative implied 'cause to move a vehicle such as a car'. This can be observed in the sentences given below.

26. I will rum you up to town.

27. I will run you back home.

In other words, Walk, when used as a transitive requires a patient marked +Animate whereas Run as transitive takes a patient marked –Animate. Walk is more restricted in meaning than Run.

For mode, Walk is marked –Swift, -Slow and +Foot, while run is only marked for swiftness. Walk requires an Animate Agent or patient whereas it may be Animate for run. These semantic distinctions and

selectional restrictions are responsible for the acceptable or non-acceptability of the sentences in which they occur. Thus, in terms of selectional restrictions 28 and 29 are unacceptable.

\*28. He walked the car into the garage.

\*29. He put his around me and ran me off.

The semantic composition of Walk and Run may be represented as follows:

<u>Walk</u>	<u>Run</u>
U Ref	U Ref
U Dir	U Dir
M Mode (- Swift, +Foot)	M Mode ((+swift)
( Animate Agent/Patient)	( Animate Agent/Patient)

Jump V Hop V Trot V Gallop

Jump

30. He jumped to his feet.
31. The dog jumped over the fence.
32. He was jumping up and down in excitement.
33. The manager jumped out of his chair.
34. She jumped into the taxi.
35. The speaker jumped from religion to politics.
36. Jane jumped down her husband's throat.
37. I jumped the horse over the fence.
38. He jumped for joy.
39. Her heart jumped when she heard the news.
40. Gold shares jumped on the Stock Exchange yesterday.
41. He jumped at the offer.
42. Don't jump to conclusion until you read the letter.
43. The teacher jumped (up) on the inattentive pupil.

None of the other three verbs than Jump, viz., Hop, Trot and Gallop can substituted for Jump in the sentence above.

Jump physically involves a movement that is sudden and non-repetitive. It generally requires an Animate Agent with a few exceptions such as 40 where the meaning is obviously figurative. It is marked +up, +vertical, +Horizontal for direction and for mode +Sudden, Repetitive.

Hop

44. Sparrows were hopping about on the lawn.  
45. He hurt his left foot and had to hop along.

Trot

46. Well, I must be trotting off home.  
47. You trot away!  
48. Smith was trotting out his knowledge.  
49. He trotted Jane off her legs.

Gallop

50. He galloped across the field.  
51. I must gallop through my work.

Here, in the sentences above, the semantic distinctions are more crucial than the syntactic differences because none of them can be a substitute semantically to the other two.

Hop is marked +Vertical, +Horizontal for direction and +Repetitive for mode. Trot is unmarked for direction and for mode it is marked –Swift, -Slow. Gallop is also unmarked for direction and marked +Swift and +Repetitive for mode. All these are unmarked for reference and require an Agent/Patient marked +Animate. Their semantic features may be shown as follows:

<u>Jump</u>	<u>Hop</u>	<u>Trot</u>	<u>Gallop</u>
M Dir	M Dir	U Dir	U Dir
(+up, +vertical, +horizontal)	(+vertical, +horizontal)		
M Mode	M Mode	M Mode	M Mode
(+sudden, -repetitive)	(+repetitive)	(-swift, -slow)	(+swift, +repetitive)

Crawl V Creep

Crawl

52. The snake crawled into the room  
53. The wounded soldier crawled into a shell-hole.  
54. Don't crawl to your boss.

- 55. Our train crawled over the damaged bridge.
- 56. The ground was crawling with ants.
- 57. She says that the sight of snakes makes her flesh crawl.

Creep

- 58. The cat crept silently towards the bird.
- 59. Old age creeps upon one unawares.
- 60. A feeling of drowsiness crept over him.
- 61. Ivy had crept over the ruined castle walls.
- 62. The sight of the cold damp prison cell with rats running about, made her flesh creep.

These two verbs are partially synonymous and hence in 52 and 57 creep can replace crawl and vice versa. This is not possible in sentences 53 to 57.

Both crawl and creep are marked +Horizontal and +Vertical for direction. In mode both are marked +Slow and Crawl is marked +Body while Creep is marked +Belly. Crawl always requires an animate agent whereas it may be animate in the case of Creep. Both are unmarked for reference.

Their minimal destination may be shown as follows:

<u>Crawl</u>	<u>Creep</u>
M Mode	M Mode
+Body	+Belly
(Animate Agent)	(Animate Agent)

Rise V Fall

Rise and Fall are antonyms in a way look at the following sentences.

- 63. The wounded man fall and was too weak to rise.
- 64. His voices rose in angry.
- 65. His voice fell to a whisper.
- 66. Mercury is rising.
- 67. The barometer is falling.
- 68. The wind is rising.

69. The wind fell during the night.

70. Where does the Nile rise?

71. The river falls into the lake.

But they are not antonyms always as in the following pairs of sentences.

72. The sun rises in the East.

\*73. The sun falls in the west.

74. Darkness fell upon the screen.

\*75. Light rose upon the scene.

Rise itself has a wide range of meaning, but fall has yet a wider range. The main distinction between Rise and Fall is in that the former is marked +up for Direction and for mode it is Volition while the latter is marked +Down for direction and is -Volition for mode. Both can take Animate Agent.

This distinction is borne out in their syntactic co-occurrence possibilities with regard to prepositions or adverbs. Compare the following.

76. He will rise to greatness.

77. He fell into disgrace.

Both of these verbs are unmarked for reference. The semantic components of Rise and Fall may be represented as follows:

Rise

M Dir (+Up)

U mode

Fall

M Dir (+Down)

M Mode (-Volition)

### Conclusion

The implication underlying the foregoing componential analysis of the semantic field, the verbs of motion of English is that the learners of English can use English verbs of motion appropriately and meaningfully in their English. For instance such unacceptable, ungrammatical, deviant and nonsensical sentences such as:

\*Sherkhan tried to assassinate Mougli's.

\*the police hunted the thief.

\*the garden is creeping with ants etc.



Such an awareness of the subtle semantic differences across the member verbs of a given semantic field will enable language learners to appreciate the effect of syntax variation and to employ appropriate styles in their own language.

Similar accounts of other semantic verbs of English and also those of nouns can be undertaken by future researcher to make teaching of English as a second or foreign language more effective and purposeful.

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## Concerning Feminine Identity in Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*

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**Abstract:** The paper is an attempt to characterize the exploration of feminine identity in the play, *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1955) by Eugene O’Neill, an American Playwright. Through the character of the female protagonist, there is evidence pertaining to the female form of resistance against the established cultural and gender isolation. The study explores the representation of the psychological profile of the female character wherein the play, Mary Tyrone is placed to face hardships in a dominant patriarchal setting; and of the ways she recreated an identity for escape. Accordingly, by examining the female character, the protagonist amends the female identity from being a ‘medium’ that serves the male’s intent into an advancement of self-reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Feminine, resistance, gender isolation, identity.

### Introduction

The term *Gender* has often been conflated with *Sex*; and has been used interchangeably at times. However, they are both two distinct concepts. Numerous definitions of gender identity points to an individual’s sense of masculinity and femininity in terms of their biological sex. Identities that have been studied from a psychoanalytic perspective examine individuals in their developing psychological dispositions whereas social structural theories examine the intricacies of social structures and how it shapes social identity. In evaluating differences, Chodorow (1997) states that,

[...] our own sense of differentiation, of separateness from others, as well as our psychological and cultural experience and interpretation of gender or sexual difference, are created through psychological, social, and cultural processes, and through relational experiences (17).

The concept of feminine identity has been examined and debated for its critical function in the development of discerning the sexual dichotomy of both agencies. Fundamentally, this concept is the outcome of Freud’s lecture on “Femininity” while discussing the “riddle of femininity” or of sexual differentiation, Freud impeaches women as “the problem” (Kamber 1). Freud’s analysis on female sexuality conveyed the ineffectiveness of the varied ideas related to the psychosexual growth of the female. On a critique of Freud’s views on masculine and feminine traits, Freud believed that the cause of

narcissism and self-indulgent traits presented both psychologically and behaviorally in females than males have its roots in the laceration of the female's ego from the realization that she does not possess a penis. As such, it is implied that Freud's problem in understanding female sexuality was complex and his views of "female sexual development focused on a picture of girls as defective boys" (Cohler and Levy 3) and his approach towards sexuality was from the point of view of the boy-a male child (ibid 5). Thus, the ambiguity and incomprehensibility of female identity is thrown to light.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born in New York (U.S) in 1888 and like his father, James O'Neill, he was born into the theatre; himself being born in a hotel, in the literal sense. He spent his early childhood in hotel rooms, on trains and backstage. He died in the year 1953 leaving with him a legacy as the only American playwright ever to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was dramatically affected by his family's tragic relationships-his mother, father, and his older brother; therefore, his literary works were often written from an intensely personal point of view. This play was posthumously produced and is an autobiographical play that describes afflicted relations between family members. In *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), O'Neill's wish to create a work of eminence can be seen, evidence was left by him as early as 1927, that he had wanted to write a play about his mother, father, and brother, and himself and call it "The Sea-Mother's Son." (King Davies). Accordingly, the play explores the varied complex relationships that have been analyzed by clinical disciplines at the turn of the century. Fixating on the persona of Mary Tyrone, the play narrates what takes place when a woman is faced with hardships and the constant process of recreation, she must undergo to establish her identity in a predominant patriarchal setting. Thus, *Long Day's Journey into Night* supports a frame of reference of gender relations from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Of the various concerns that have developed in the theoretical approaches to identity, the first and foremost enquiry that approaches the mind is concerned with the question of what identity is. The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* gives a definition of identity as "the relation established by psychological identification" ... and an entry for "identity" in the *OED* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition,1989) defines it as: "2. a. The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality." "Identity" in its current, historically novel complex of meanings derives most of all from Erik Erikson's work in the 1950s. By the 1970s the word used in this sense had acquired a highly successful life of its own in ordinary language and many social science disciplines. Under the influence of postmodernism and debates over multiculturalism, the late 1980s and 1990s found historians, anthropologists, and most of all humanities scholars relying evermore heavily on "identity" as they explored the cultural politics of race, class, ethnicity, gender,

sexuality, citizenship, and other social categories (Fearon, 35-36).

The distinction between personal and collective identity; on the concept of identity as socially constructed remains a rather complicated one. As such, Erikson (1972, 274) asserted that ‘the study of identity becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud’s time’. This could have led him to conclude that the same intellectual, political, and religious powers interested in the repression of sexuality in Freud’s time would be interested in the scotomisation and denegation of identity processes and strategies in our time. Indeed, both are strong emotionally ambivalent processes linking the self-contradictory organisation of the mind to the self-contradictory organisation of the world; they begin in the bonds of individuals to their parents and siblings in families and communities of descent and that of personal identities to familial, communitarian, ethnic and national identities (and sometimes religious identities), in ways that state politicians and bureaucratic managers, philosophers or social scientists cannot control or manage (Bastos, 314).

Analyzing identity in relation to sexuality may provide a disparate aspect for established gender behaviors. Taking a theoretical alteration from Freud’s indication on the sexuality of the male and female infant sexuality, Irigaray proposes that “in the process of elaborating a theory of sexuality, Freud brought to light something that had been operative all along though it remained implicit, hidden unknown: *the sexual indifference that underlies the truth of any science, the logic of discourse*. This is readily apparent in the way Freud defines female sexuality... the “feminine” is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex.” (Irigaray, 69). In this instance, Mary Tyrone in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* breaks the association of women as being incomplete in a predominant male culture, as she transgressed the confines of established normality by exiting from reality through her pathological use of drugs. Additionally, an inherent predisposition of repressed intensities in all the Tyrones particularly on the only surviving heroine of the play is strikingly visible to which Harold Bloom (1987) in his foreword of the play mentions O’Neil as ‘*the elegist of the Freudian “family romance,” of the domestic tragedy of which we all die daily, a little bit at a time. The helplessness of family love to sustain, let alone heal, the wounds of marriage, of parenthood, and of sonship, have never been so remorselessly and so pathetically portrayed, and with a force of gesture too painful ever to be forgotten by any of us*’ (xii).

The play opens with the narrator introducing the female character Mary Tyrone in uppercase alphabet referring to James Tyrone as her husband without a mention of his name. O’Neil’s stage directions propel the psychological content of the scenes as much as the dialogue. Along with her physical attributes are the mention of her demeanor of extreme nervousness and her inability to control them. Then, as the play unfolds, the narrator leaves commentaries examining the themes of the play by arranging each

of the character's dialogues to convey its language as well as its psychological contents. The indication of the dialogue of the Tyrones are such that they are carried in mixed messages from adoration to sudden aversions as the subject of their conversations shifts from extremities of emotions. As the story of the play moves to and fro from the present to the past, so does our attention to the scope of human emotion and its powerful ramifications. It is in the character of Mary Tyrone that the play progresses as the circumstances each family member lives through are dictated by her addiction and thereby dominating the stage. The Tyrones had their own share of sufferings and shortcomings and the only panacea being sedating themselves to make their reality seemed much bearable, but it is in Mary Tyrone that tragedy intensifies for her addiction was not self-inflicted nor was it a premeditated choosing, it was the perpetration of her husband's penny-pinching attitude that the morphine was administered.

## **Findings**

In the play, the mind is deeply involved, the intellectual processes play a significant part in unveiling how gender-based roles are constructed and how they force individuals to fit into the prescribed identification all the while impelling women to be subjected to men. The exchange of dialogues in the play; therefore, the commentaries of the narrator throughout the play's acts and scenes are consequential, and the motifs and plot patterns are worth a closer exploration. Even though the tacit disclosure in the literary content is relatively arduous to deduce, their outcomes substantially construct gender dynamics between sexes. For instance, the play starts with a description of Mary's attributes- a mention of her extreme nervousness which is juxtaposed with James having no nerves (O'Neil, 12-13) to justify gender differences, an implicit meaning that classifies women as unstable and men as stable beings, a description that categorize sexes by dichotomy and differences. As seen in male dominated societies, there is an inherent acceptance of the male sex to be relatively stolid.

Accordingly, "femininity" is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself by playing on her femininity (Irigaray, 84). The term "femininity" is significant since Mary Tyrone in her passivity reminisces bygone days and isolates herself in her own created world as a form of resistance against this very system of masquerade which requires her to put in additional effort, thus, breaking away from her expected feminine role. As the play progresses, there are traces of Mary where she denies her own reality, she was discontented with the roles and circumstances she was bestowed with as she states, "I've always hated this town and everyone in it... I've never felt it was my home. It was wrong from the start." (O'Neil, 44-45) condemning her husband for an undercurrent of lonely yearnings she possesses since "he never wanted family friends" (45). Hence, the isolation that Mary feels throughout the play results from the "feminine"

never being identified except by and for the masculine, the reciprocal proposition not being “true” (Irigaray, 85).

In Act Two, Scene One of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, there is a foreshadowing of what was to transpire through the atmosphere and imageries directed by O'Neil, “no sunlight comes into the room...a faint haziness in the air which softens the glare of the sun.” (53). As Mary enters from the front parlor, there is a peculiar detachment in her voice and manner, as if she were a little withdrawn from her words and actions justifying both Jamie and Edmund's suspicions but which on Mary's part is a journey towards liberation from societal repressions and expectations. Mary's self-identity is knitted in the trajectories of the concept of home, of a deep pining for rootedness not solely in the physical but more so in the spiritual sense. In this example, Mary condemns her husband saying that he does not understand a home with an underlying realization that James Tyrone as the patriarchal head himself does not feel at home in their house and yet wanting a home and loving this placement, forcing the family to settle in a shabby place. Hence, Mary's discontentment is seen through the narration and commentaries where she goes beyond the male construct of home and decides to be detached and presupposes a world where she would have an independent abode, a place that was not made by any male member, but of a home where she could be her own self. By the end of the scene, even though Mary denied her relapse, she succumbed to her indulgence which creates a delusional haziness in her and the air to fill the entirety of their home.

The character of Mary Tyrone's constant return to her idealized past shows her desire to escape from the expectations that is accorded to women in their tenuous familial structure. Chodorow (1997) mentions that there is a ‘preoccupation among some women with psychological separateness and autonomy, with individuality as a necessary women's goal. She further states that this preoccupation grows out of many women's feelings of not having distinct autonomy as separate selves, in comparison to men’ (10). This is evident in the scene when Mary was back from the sanatorium, her husband and sons were hopeful that she was finally cured. What can be seen in their treatment of Mary was their hopefulness of her fitting back into the role of a doting wife and mother. Mary at this point failed to provide her family of what most women in their domestic space were expected to give- selflessness and sacrifice. This demand for self-abnegation was the norm for women in the turn of the twentieth century, and in the play Mary in her youth submitted to domesticity which she later regretted and attributed this act to her reason for her and her family's maladjustments and afflictions. Intermittently throughout the play, Mary was in search of an answer and never did find one in the physical realm. She stated to Edmund that, “How could you believe me- when I can't believe myself? I've become such a liar. I never lied about anything once upon a time. Now I have to lie, especially to myself.... except that one day long ago I found I could no

longer call my soul my own” (96).

Concerning the familial relationship of the Tyrones, Mary, in conversation with herself, unfolds pieces of the past as the play progresses. As the only female in the family, it is simple to comprehend Mary’s isolation with a close reading of her narratives when she was inebriated. She is the only member in her family who was relocated from her birthplace; Tyrone sr. and his sons as they navigated through life did not have to let go of their formative years. Mary, on the other hand, could not find a remedy to replace her former comfort and yearnings, the only panacea being the drug which transports her to the pleasant memory of her bygone days. Regarding the perception of ‘mother’ as an object, Chodorow advocated equal parenting as a necessary basis of sexual equality (12). Mary appeared to have given up herself for her family and this evidently left her feeling faithless. She longed for a permanent settlement which she never seemed to find up to the end of the play. While James Tyrone would pursue his dreams, Mary was often left alone to tend to the needs of her sons. And this has made her drift afar from her faith as well as herself, thus, leading to the development of her habit.

## **Conclusion**

The attitudes towards mothers and expectations of mothers emerge in the earliest differentiation of self and arise during the emergence of separateness. In continuation to this statement, Chodorow opines,

Given that differentiation and separation are developmentally problematic, and given that women are primary caretakers, the mother, who is a woman, becomes and remains for children of both genders the other, or object. She is not accorded autonomy or selfness on her side (14).

Dwelling on the individuality of Mary Tyrone, what is evident is the sequence of upheavals that created the person that she was after entering married life and being a mother to her children. To all the intents and purposes, the cyclical conflict and trauma of the failed American dream in the male members can be acknowledged profoundly. However, the identity that was emanated on the sole female member reflects the differences of actions and expectations towards women from their male counterparts. The character, Mary Tyrone was not accorded any form of ‘selfness’ nor ‘autonomy’, she had to play the role that society demanded of women in O’Neill’s time.

In conclusion, Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1955) is as much a portrayal of feminine identity as much as it is a psychoanalysis of the extensive human emotions. With the failure of healthy familial relations, it offers the character’s inability to be at terms with their past and what is at

present. With the position that she holds in the family, her identity and her desires were compromised. She missed the stability that her childhood home offered, and of the unmet dreams she once had as a young woman. Moreover, the social position she was planted in drove her to her addiction. In her benumbed state, she would drift off to what she considered a safe place. She is now disenchanted as well as disillusioned and struggles to find her identity. Her past and her present conflicts with her future, as her opiate addiction becomes the cause of all her and her family's quandary which further questions her own understanding of identity.

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## **Challenging Imperial Ideas: (Re) evaluating 1943 Bengal Famine as Man-Made Holocaust**

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to make a historical interrogation of the Bengal Famine of 1943 from economic and socio-political perspectives. In order to do so, it challenges the popular Malthus theory, undertaken by the then War Cabinet of Britain as an excuse to hide the deaths during the famine in Bengal (1943)- one of their colonial sins, which eradicated millions of innocent Indians. The stakeholders of British India blamed the high birth rate as the major cause of the famine. Madhushree Mukerjee, in her research-length book Churchill's Secret War (2018), negotiates with the memoirs of the statesmen like Lord Cherwell and Lord Amery and testimonies of a few civil servants, among others, to establish the inhuman and careless attitude of the British government towards her subjects. In other words, this paper critiques both the intentions and actions of the colonizers. Foregrounding this event, it also taps some of the factual details and data from contemporary India, which was under Japanese attack at that time, triggering the man-made onslaught. Our discussion concludes with the findings of some of the most recent revelations made by the researchers of IIT Gandhinagar, justifying the false economic claims of the colonizers.

**Key-words:** Famine, Economy, Denial, Hostility, War.

The social history of Bengal is essentially a history of famines. Starvation, deaths from starvation, and epidemics triggered by famines were an integral part of the colonial experience of Bengal. Besides natural disasters like droughts and cyclones, inhuman and illogical taxation system adopted by the East-India Company, faulty policies and measurements of the British Government pushed the economy of the colony to the verge of collapse. In other words, inexperienced colonial rulers, added with deliberate diplomatic intentions of genocide, devastated India in general and Bengal in particular continuously, claiming millions of lives throughout the colonial era. Instead of providing any generalization of historical documentation of famines in Bengal, this study will be a detailed and nuanced analysis of the famine of 1943 from economic and socio-political perspective. This paper, however, attempts to challenge the popular Malthus Theory, alleged to be the sole reason behind the Bengal famine of 1943 by the then War Cabinet of Britain.

The general notion behind a famine has been considered to be an acute crisis of food for a long time. Yet, contrary to this, economists like T.R. Malthus somehow make a link between the food supply of a particular place and the growth of population of that area in his doctrine. Elaborating this point, he establishes the assumption that whereas People's lack of sexual restraints result in an explosion of population, famine is one of the nature's "corrective measures" and "positive checks" to make a balance within food chain (Mukerjee 237). Malthus's this theory of population was no less influential in Victorian England than Darwin's Struggle for Existence theory. However, using this theory a reason behind the Bengal famine of 1943, what British War Cabinet did, was to wash their hands off from taking any responsibility from it. Such manipulations are evident in the confessions of several imperial servants. For instance, the account of Lord Amery, both the Secretaries of State and an eye witness of that situation (moderately) accuse misgovernment, crop failure and the League of Nations for such a massive holocaust. Yet, imperial loyalists like Lord Cherwell continue to hold the high birthrate of Bengal accountable for their disaster. He was a key advisor to then British Prime Minister Churchill, a staunch supporter of western superiority over ignorant Indians. Remembering Churchill, abhorrence and racial superiority can be reflected in the words of Lord Amery: "Winston, after a preliminary flourish on Indians breeding like rabbits and being paid a million a day by us for doing nothing about the war" (238).

Madhushree Mukerjee, in her book-length study on the Bengal famine of 1943, categorically dismisses the framework of Malthus as old and absurd in the present day condition of free trade and market system- that is Globalization. She further argues to justify her point on Malthus:

Throughout the nineteenth century Indians were harvesting enough grain to feed themselves, but the export cycle had drained the grain surpluses and the driven food prices beyond the reach of the poor. Great Britain, in contrast, produced far less grain than necessary to sustain its people but was free of Malthusian constraints on its population because it relied on imported food... by his Malthusian logic Britain should have been the first to starve- but was being sustained by food imports that were six times larger than the one-and-a-half million tons that the Government of India had requested for the coming year. (237-238)

Besides Mukerjee, regarding the Bengal famine of 1943, Noble laureate economists like Amartya Sen reject this population theory of Malthus too and attacks the distribution system more vehemently. In his book *Poverty and Famines* (1981), Sen argues while explaining the 1943 famine that there was no noticeable drop in food supply in 1943 which could have caused the lives of almost three millions (202). Therefore, the deaths were not resulted from any natural disaster or population explosion but "because they did not have sufficient exchange entitlement to food, or, in other words, they did not have enough

wherewithal to buy food” (Batabyal 77). Coining the term *entitlement* in context of Bengal famine, Sen exposes how the purchasing power of the people suddenly vanishes within society. R.W. Davies goes one step further and links the entitlement of a person to the socio-political condition of that particular place. The following study will reveal the inhuman and unreasonable policies taken by the imperial government to defend the Japanese attack, causing the dire destruction of lower and lower-middle class Bengalis.

The warzone of World War II expanded up to the south-east Asia with the appearance of Japan in the scenario. Japan entered the World War by shattering the American fleet completely at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. After winning the fort of Singapore in January and Rangoon’s fall on March, Japanese invasion was almost at the door of Calcutta. At this juncture, with absolutely no modern warfare equipments, Churchill left the whole Indian population at their fate with only 14 outdated bombers, no anti-aircraft guns, and no will power to save the subcontinent: “There must be at this stage no thought of saving the troops or sparing the population... The honor of the British Empire and the British Army is at stake” (Mukerjee 94). Yet, what problematized the situation more was Prime Minister Churchill launching the scorched earth policy or the Denial Policy at the wake of Japanese invasion. Explaining this dismissive policy, Mukerjee portrays it as “ruthless destruction in any territory we have to surrender” (97). As the delta of Bengal had hundreds of river, the river routs were the possible risk points for Japanese attack. Therefore, implementing the scorched earth policy as precautionary measure, Amery instructed: “The army was to destroy industrial, military, and transport facilities, while the civil administration should deprive the enemy of sustenance. Water supplies and minimum stock of essential foodstuffs should be left for local inhabitants” (97).

As mentioned earlier about the geographical structure of the lower part of the Ganges, boats are its lifeline- the chief source of income for the people and the only means of transportation for this area. The inhabitants either work as boatmen or sail to the sea daily for fishes. To estimate the damage, let us bring into context governmental archives like Nanavati Papers which have kept records of the testimonies of hundreds of concerned bureaucrats and victims of that period. Pinnell, one British civil servant confesses: ‘Demolishing boats meant destroying livelihoods for anyone who knows the Bengal cultivator it was a completely heart-breaking job’ (545-546). The instruction was to destroy, burn, and capsize all the water vassals, capable of carrying ten or more persons of the coastal areas with immediate effect. The total number of registered boats at that time was 66563. This policy broke the economic backbone of the fishing community completely. Mukerjee further notes:

In December 1943 a journalist visited Faridpur in eastern Bengal and was told by an elderly survivor that in his fishing village of 200 households, 50 had perished in entirety. The 35,000

families that lost their homes and fields to military barracks and aerodromes would also feature prominently among the victims of famine. (Mukerjee 100)

Comparing with the Boat Denial, the impact of Rice Denial was even more devastating for the small farmers and economically weaker sections. However, here too, the government didn't imply the scorched earth policy in its traditional sense, i.e. burning the soil. Instead, they directed that the rice should be removed from storehouses of the rice traders and farms of the landowners. Nevertheless, it is curious to note that the local civic bodies and police did the exact opposite of what they were supposed to do. In fact, they went on rampaging on every stock they found and destroying it. Whether it was the failure of the government to implement its policies or the misinformation among the local bodies that destroyed tons of rice foolishly, would be a matter of further investigation.

Coming up to the response of the authorities, instead of sending immediate relief and supply of food, the British Government turned a deaf ear to the colony. One thing is evident: the viceroy of India, Governor of Bengal, and Secretary of State repeatedly made the War Cabinet aware of the food crisis and an impending disaster. However, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, a puritan and imperialist by nature, believed in racial superiority of the Britons over the world and had contempt for Indians. At this juncture, what shocked even his colleagues, was his antipathy and hostility toward the sufferings of the Indians. For instance, his longtime friend and associate Lord Amery noted down in his diary:

It is an awful thing dealing with a man like Winston who is at the same moment dictatorial, eloquent and muddleheaded... I am not sure that I ever got into his mind that India pays for the whole of her defense including the British forces in India, or that there is no possible way of reducing these accumulating balances except by stopping to buy Indian goods or employing Indian soldiers outside India. (Barnes 836)

Instead of sending immediate aids like food grains, medicines, and other necessary stuffs, London kept on reminding India of her Sterling debt. Yet, Amery agrees to the fact that Britain had exported far more valuables from India in last two centuries than she had given to the colony. Speaking critically, it was the hypocrisy of Churchill which made him finding excuses and leaving an entire province and its inhabitants to die. It was at this juncture, Lord Linlithgow asked the Secretary of the State for wheat and other cereals: 'Bengal's normal demand is 18000 tons a month and we are short of nearly twice this amount over last quarter alone. Amount of 110 tons mentioned by you therefore represents only few hours supply. If factory workers who ate wheat did not get it, they would either riot or leave' (Mukerjee 141). Still, the War Cabinet was bargaining that they would send wheat only if India promised to export 30000 tons of rice to Ceylon. Expecting rice from a country, who was still suffering from a thousand cuts of

famine and cyclone, was not only unkindly and hypocritical but an act of shamelessness. As reminder, in January 1943, Lord Amery again wrote to the ministry of War Transport about the immediate necessity of 600000 tons of wheat within the first four months of that year. This time the shipping committee came up with another excuse, that they didn't have sufficient number of vassals for civil purposes, as most of the ships were engaged between Australia and Middle East. Although Leathers, the minister of War Transport, was obliged to send 26000 tons of wheat from Australia, he found it unnecessary to ship any more food to India. Instead, the Ministry of War Transport thanked the officials of India for dealing the country's food demands with a stern hand, or the colony would have devoured Britain's share by a million ton. Having requested for almost 600,000 tons of wheat, India received a little less than 30,000 tons by July 1943. This was nowhere near the original requirement of food for the famine-infested Bengal. On the ground, most of the foods were being circulated within the urban area of Calcutta among the elite classes, depriving the coastal districts. As the Government of India received nothing after several pleas from their seniors, they had nothing to explain to the local administrations of Bengal, who were repeatedly asking for food consignments. Instead they tried to manipulate Justice B. L. Henry Braund with lame excuses like: 'This shortage is a thing entirely of your own imagination. We do not believe it and you have got to get it out of your head that Bengal is deficit. You have got to preach that there is sufficiency in Bengal and if you wait you will find there is sufficiency in Bengal'(161). The deception continues as the Viceroy met Haq, chief minister of Bengal and convinced that Bengal should produce more rice for Ceylon to receive more rewards from London. But data says quite opposite of it: 'Whereas India annually imported at least a million tons of rice and wheat before the war, it exported a net 360,000 tons during the fiscal year April 1, 1942, to March 31, 1943. Of this quantity, 260,000 tons were rice. Gross exports of foodgrains (including lentils) in that fiscal year totaled 465,000 tons'(163). So, these data verifies that British claims of not receiving enough exports from India were a sham and crookery. Bengal exported 71,000 tons of rice from Calcutta port even during the famine.

When most of the people had already been starved for more than two months, distributing coarse millets and grains could be fatal to their health. Long starved stomach should not be fed with solid food, but the victims didn't have grinding machine to crush the grains. As expected, diarrhea broke out among the refugee camps. Whereas civil servants like Olaf Martin voluntarily distributed boiled mixture of sweet porridge among orphanage children, the famine commission found it arrogant on the part of the victims, not to eat whole grains without even understanding the health hazards. Australia usually exported wheat pre-grinded, but the commission was too reluctant to feed "Bengali villagers" with high quality food. Mukerjee has measured the condition well:

As long as food could be exported from India for use in the war theaters, the imperial administration had exported it. But while the colony itself suffered from famine—in no small part because of the scarcity and inflation resulting from such extractions of supplies—shiploads of Australian wheat would pass it by, to be stored for future consumption in southern Europe’ (182).

The gravity of the situation was known to everyone, from Prime Minister Winston Churchill to viceroy Linlithgow, but they deliberately chose to act dumb. Newspapers of that time filed with horrific details of the Bengal province and the destitute condition of the common people: ‘Mothers had turned into murderers, village belles into whores, fathers into traffickers of their daughters’(Mukerjee 195). The permission of shipments began to come as late as September of 1943, which would take November to come. 5,000 tons of wheat reached India from Canada in November. These late consignments, that too not even the 5% of the original demand, raised the brows of Churchill. Amery’s anger was clearly visible in his diary entry:

I fought my battle for Indian food as hard as I could. Winston was prepared to admit that something should be done but very strong on the point that Indians are not the only people who are starving in this war and that as far as the war goes it is just as important to get food to Greece... Winston may be right in saying that the starvation of anyhow under-fed Bengalis is less serious than sturdy Greeks, but he makes no sufficient allowance for the sense of Empire responsibility in this country’(229).

Churchill’s personal grudge could be traced from such actions as delaying or giving no clearance to the consignments of foods particularly to India. It is recorded that in December 1943, Canada extended their hand towards the victims of Bengal by sending 100,000 tons of wheat to India as a “free gift”. Prime Minister Mackenzie King almost loaded the ships at Vancouver, waiting for Churchill’s signal to send it. The clearance did never come actually. Leftist commentator I.F. Stone criticized those who had given excuse of vehicle shortage: ‘...it is nonsense to talk of a shipping shortage in connection with food in India. With some 50,000,000 tons available, much of it inadequately utilized, a few hundred thousand tons of shipping could easily be allowed to ease the famine’(686). The documentation of British economy during war by Hancock and Growing would shed enough light that Britain had considerable stock of food for future, proving Churchill’s ranting a hollow sham:

Throughout that autumn, the United Kingdom’s civilian stocks of food and raw materials continued to swell, so that by the end of 1943 they would stand at 18.5 million tons, the highest total ever. The United Kingdom imported that year 4 million tons of wheat grain and flour, 1.4 million tons of sugar, 1.6 million tons of meat, 409,000 heads of live cattle, 325,000 tons of fish, 131,000 tons of rice, 206,000 tons of tea, 172,000 tons of cocoa, and 1.1 million gallons of wine for its 47.7 million

people—a population 14 million fewer than that of Bengal. Sugar and oilseeds overflowed warehouses and had to be stored outdoors in England under tarpaulins’ (Mukerjee 242).

While Britain had a banquet of food at home, Bengal lost almost three millions of their people.

Recently, a group of researchers from IIT Gandhinagar has analyzed the soil moisture data of 150 years from 1870 to 2016 to understand the chronology of agricultural droughts (Scroll). From their data of six famines during the colonial time- 1873-'74, 1876, 1877, 1896-'97, 1899 and 1943, they come to the conclusion that the first five occurred due to the paucity of soil moisture. But during 1943, there was no drought. Vimal Mishra, an assistant professor of Gandhinagar, declared with conviction that the famine of 1943 was the result of a complete policy failure. The famine, which was once publicized as drought and natural hazard, is clearly a well planned “man made” phenomenon. This data-based study of the Bengal famine provides ample proof to reveal the incompetence of the Government of India and the negligence of the British administration. In fact calling it a mere incompetence would be rather unjustifiable. If Hitler’s treatment of Jews inside the gas chamber is a holocaustic experience for them, Churchill’s racial attitude and deliberate attempt to push a whole country towards famine is equally devilish. The historians need to reevaluate the colonial era and the imperialist actions with fresh approaches and interdisciplinary methods for further studies.

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## **Dystopias and Control Apparatus: A Reading of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four***

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**Abstract:** Dystopian societies are intrinsically disproportionate: they propagate inequities, maintain power imbalances among stratified classes, exploit the labour of marginalised groups, and broadcast unfair ideologies that distort communal cohesion. These societies function through overlapping control systems, resulting in interconnected forces which frequently condition the circumstances for one another's preservation. For instance, violence and paranoia go hand in hand as control mechanisms, enforcing discipline and docility. Because dystopian novels are a subgenre of science fiction, the representation of the planet's grim future(s) includes the transformation of technologies into something gloomy, menacing, and dictatorial. For instance, technology might be utilised to speed up production, provide considerable advantages over earlier machine models, reduce manual labour, or even bring novel, ground-breaking methods of doing jobs. While they can also be used to innovatively suppress individual freedom and rights or subjugate efficiently through surveillance, architectural interventions, and psychoactive drugs. This paper seeks to analyse the nature of apparatus in a classical dystopia by George Orwell, titled *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Tracing the nature of the control apparatuses will throw significant light on the modern condition in terms of socio-political and technological ramifications, as dystopian novels are often allegorical portrayals of human societies.

**Keywords:** Surveillance, Technology, Control, Apparatus, Propaganda.

### **Introduction**

“There are no private lives. This is what Nixon found out. 'Course he engineered it himself, with the tapes. This is a most important aspect of modern life. As a science-fiction writer, dealing with the future, I want to speak to this. That one of the biggest transformations we have seen in human life in our society is the diminution of the sphere of the private. That we must reasonably now all regard the fact that there are no secrets and nothing is private. Everything is public.”

— Philip K. Dick (*Philip K. Dick: The Last Interview and Other Conversations*)

Dystopian societies are very often flipped and radicalised versions of ‘utopian’ communities that coerce and enslave individuals to preserve obedience to predetermined norms of behaviour, homogenised patterns, and passive livelihood. They portray a grim image of human civilizations and are frequently exaggerated results of catastrophic policies. They are zones of reflection for comprehending how unconstrained science, biopower, and control-politics distort rights and violate freedom, functioning as a blueprint for authoritarian societies that establish disproportionate systems of authority. In many dystopian novels that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is observed that a structure of massively unequal power relations underlies major actions that are crucial to the genre. Dystopian societies are inherently disproportionate: they feature quotidian inequalities, imbalances of power relations across stratified classes, exploited communities and overall, unjust ideologies that deform communal harmony. These societies operate through control mechanisms that overlap: they produce interlinked forces that often generate the conditions to maintain one another. For instance, violence and paranoia go hand in hand as control mechanisms, enforcing discipline and docility. This paper analyses the means in which these societies generate and regulate a certain form of tools or apparatuses of control. What is unique in this analysis is the fact that these operations do not function outside of surveillance, that is, watching, monitoring, and gathering of information lie at the core of the smooth functioning of these control mechanisms. To regulate this *planned* disproportion, a small segment of society exercises power across the other forms of life. The dystopian regime deploys ‘apparatus’ of control, which could signify a system, a tool or an ideology that is deeply enmeshed in the framework of societal organisation:

Crucial to dystopia’s vision in at its manifestations is this ability to register the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives of people. Again and again, the dystopian that opens in the midst of a social “elsewhere” that appears to be far worse than any in the “real” world. As the *mise-en-scène* is established in an exponential presentation of the society’s structure and operation, the narrative zooms in on one of the subjects of the terrible place. (Moylan xiii)

A society under rule relies on the mechanisms of control that imparts a systematized order, a set of ground rules that manifests into a form of penalty if violated and hence, a set of disciplinary codes are laid down to be solemnized. Without a systematised form of control, societies will not adhere to the principles, aims and vision of its ruler(s); neither will it yield to specific objectives and outcomes that underlie the state.

### **The Control Apparatus**

There are various types of apparatuses that the dystopian regimes use to attain agendas, few of which shall

be analysed in the paper. Fear and hatred as political tools, in the context of control apparatus are a recurrent trope in dystopian novels. Fear is used as a means to invoke a terrifying feeling about the consequences of not following the dictates of state. Since ancient times, fear has been used as an apparatus that intimidates subordinates or enemies and in the shepherding of tribes by leaders (Javanbakht). The idea of being attacked by predators drives both humans and animals into a state of apprehension, to be more protective about themselves and to safeguard their kith and kin. In the context of tribalism and group psychology, Arash Javanbakht writes:

At a tribal level, people are more emotional and consequently less logical: Fans of both teams pray for their team to win, hoping God will take sides in a game. On the other hand, we regress to tribalism when afraid. This is an evolutionary advantage that would lead to the group cohesion and help us fight the other tribes to survive. Tribalism is the biological loophole that many politicians have banked on for a long time: tapping into our fears and tribal instincts. Some examples are Nazism, the Ku Klux Klan, religious wars and the Dark Ages. The typical pattern is to give the other humans a different label than us, and say they are going to harm us or our resources, and to turn the other group into a concept. (Javanbakht)

Fear provokes the subjects in groups to discipline themselves and stay in regulation. Fear and hatred can be used as a political tool to turn people against one another through what is known as xenophobia or “fear of strangers”. This “otherness” of people is thus conceptualized and used by the regulators to provoke, organize hatred, and seed violent thoughts. Fear can also be used as a tool of mental subjugation, when the punishments of a crime are undisclosed, punishments are carried out in the open as a spectacle, or by combining it with threat, violence and torture to make the subjects docile and non-repulsive.

Propaganda in this context, is the spreading of information, which could be misleading in a way such that the truth is distorted and used to sway opinions in the favour of the regulators. Propaganda has always been used as an effective tool to shape public opinion, influence public perception, by using mass communication and in that manner, engages in lies, misinformation, inflammatory language, to achieve objectives or agenda. In the essay: “Visual Essay: The Impact of Propaganda”, it is stated that the Nazis used propaganda to shape beliefs and attitudes of people through a variety of mediums such as “posters, film, radio, museum exhibits” to gain public support and acceptance of their ideologies. Propaganda is often elusive and uncovering it requires a critical awareness of what constitutes the truth, exposing the underlying mechanisms of ideology that makes the propaganda work.

Surveillance is another control mechanism that is used by the regulators of power, to watch, gather data and in turn instill a particular sense of discipline in the subjects. Surveillance comes from two French

words, *sur-* meaning “over” and *veiller* meaning “watch”, and like its etymological origin, it could come to mean as a careful, tactical observation and monitoring of suspects, and more frequently in the modern world it stands for how individuals globally are tracked, monitored, and kept under watch by corporations and governments. Surveillance in the context of dystopias allows all kinds of information to flow towards the regulators, because without the crucial data on the subjects, they will not be prone to systematic control. Keeping a constant tab on the day-to-day and in accordance, second-by-second record of activities fabricates an advantageous ground to those wielding power. So much so, that a plethora of dystopian medias including novels, films, anime, and TV shows have the overarching theme of surveillance to show how modern societies are societies of surveillance, wherein “data” is the most crucial currency.

Since dystopian novels are a sub-genre of science fiction, the portrayal of bleak future(s) of the planet includes the metamorphosis of technologies into something dark, sinister, and oppressive. Technology could be used to accelerate means of production, give significant advantages over older models of machines, ease manual labour or even introduce innovative, ground-breaking methods of accomplishing tasks. On the other hand, they can also be used innovatively to suppress individual freedom and rights or subjugate effectively in terms of how much data can be gathered and processed—automating the cultures of surveillance and border politics, innovate weaponry and bio-chemical warfare, create simulation and fake data more efficiently, and also genetically modify and introduce several changes to the body. Technology is thereby a crucial apparatus for the dystopian imagination, as the future that stands before us is already terrifyingly apprehensive when it comes to the ideas of nuclear wars, the rise of A.I. and disruptive technology.

### **The Nature of Apparatus in *Nineteen Eighty-Four***

In George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, fear had been used as a fundamental apparatus in seeding the ideology of “otherness” within people. Society had been bent against those who were opposing the Party, as they participated in the two-minute hate for Goldstein and his likes. With the removal of democratic ideas, the party had significantly turned hatred as a political tool:

The Party uses networks of undercover spies to inspire paranoia, spreading fear and distrust. With the creation of Newspeak they make it impossible to vocalize any thought counter to their desires. The Party isolates every individual, destroying all social bonds, so as to foment paranoia and hatred. (Rissanen 11)

The fear regulated in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* about the punishment for dissenters and the constant paranoia of surveillance propels the society to remain docile and silent regarding the atrocities. The ideology of fear and propaganda is so deep that they even participate in ratting people out to the thought police, if they

suspect someone of having committed a “thought crime”:

This mechanism of hate and fear empowers the Party, in terms of resources – they can depend on their citizens to root out treachery and dissent, from an early age, which in turns creates an ideology that rewards and fosters the rooting out of traitors and Thought criminals. (Rissanen 12)

Propaganda in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is deeply symbolic of the fact that Winston Smith himself deletes the real information and is engaged in the mechanism of both: censorship and propaganda. In the creation of the character Comrade Ogilvy, Winston supplies them with a false model of virtue, like the obligation towards the Party and the punishment of the traitors (Yeo 52). Along with this, the Ministry of Truth also supplies the subjects with all kinds of misleading information, botched histories, modified documents, etc, across a variety of mediums, which help the propaganda machine run. In Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* only men are allowed to work, while the women are coerced to work inside the household premises and to procreate as “handmaids”. The propaganda took place mostly at the Red Center wherein the girls were indoctrinated with what “immoralities” and “impurities” at a time before the regime (Cordova). In Ray Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451*, the government spreads propaganda related to the reading of books and gets the society to pause rigorous intellectual activity, while giving them false facts and ideologies over television. This was done in a bid to prevent proper circulation of knowledge and to hinder the shaping of critical minds toward an informed and aware subjectivity.

Surveillance is a fundamental apparatus of control in most dystopian novels. It is surveillance that lends operational power to the regulatory regimes. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Party uses “telescreens” and keeps spies known as “thought police” to monitor, regulate and oppress individuals. These help the Party to not just collect the data of the individuals but also discipline them into following the regulations, through a sustained principle in their psychology. The “panoptic” presence of surveillance enables the party to keep the paranoia building in the regime, wherein the subjects do as they are told in front of the cameras which monitor them and audio receivers which listen to all their conversations. Coupled with dehumanizing laws, the pervasive surveillance as apparatus is what allows the Party to maintain its control over the subjects. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Gilead is under constant surveillance through the hierarchy and architecture: the presence of watchtowers, borders, high posts and armed guards; the all-seeing eyes of the military group, the aunts who train and discipline the girls and self-surveillance through which the oppressive system is internalized and maintained within (Nyström 7).

When it comes to technology, the dystopian regimes employ a number of these thwarted innovations to subjugate and regulate their subjects: the telescreen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* oppresses the

individual freedom, in *Brave New World* Huxley introduces a control mechanism through a conditioning technology called “hypnopaedia” and to maintain and regulate birth, in a society wherein everyone is technologically “engineered” not just to be “modified” but also to stay “happy”: “The morals and aspirations of the society are not those of our society today - such as family, love, and success - but instead are focused around industry, economy, and technologic growth and improvement” (Miller).

Technology is a vital aspect of our lives and times, as since the industrial age, the advancements in technology have ushered in indispensable amenities that have affected human lives and, in many ways, changed our relationship with the world. Technology had been celebrated as a sign of civility and progress in many science fiction novels and likewise, the concept of unrestrained technology too had entered the realm of literature as early as *Gulliver’s Travels* or sometime later in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Martin Heidegger suggested the turn towards nihilism as a sign of forgetting ‘being’ and in his later writings, he illuminated how our relationship with technology was bringing about a certain change (for the worse), in the way we view things:

He argues that we now view nature, and increasingly human beings too, only technologically — that is, we see nature and people only as raw material for technical operations. Heidegger seeks to illuminate this phenomenon and to find a way of thinking by which we might be saved from its controlling power, to which, he believes, modern civilization both in the communist East and the democratic West has been shackled. We might escape this bondage, Heidegger argues, not by rejecting technology, but by perceiving its danger. (Blitz)

Heidegger’s views explicate how our perception of the world through a technological thinking has caused our ruin. A similar view can be taken into consideration while examining the relationship between the surveillance societies in dystopian novels and unrestrained technology. Writers like Huxley, Zamyatin, Orwell, and Atwood had made similar interventions into how advancements in technology had accelerated the way in which humans, resources and environment are exploited, leading to massive degenerations.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, technology was the fore-bearer of the control apparatus. Out of all the other means of asserting control, the invention of ‘telescreen’ imparted a fearsome quality of losing autonomy, that needed an enormous risk to bypass:

The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was, of course, no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. (Orwell 3)

The technology used in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has some specific tasks, and on examination, the connection between surveillance and the deployment of a technology like telescreen is obvious: it is the means to gain access into the privacy of the citizens of Oceania, who are under the direct influence of Big Brother. This constant surveillance wrecks all possibilities of counterattacks and planning, and neither does it allow any 'odd' or out-of-routine exercises.

There are two reasons or purposes technology in Oceania is used for: military and socio-oppressive ones. In other words, technology does not function to 'make easier' citizens' lives, make more effective their work, education, communication etc., it does not connect with leisure or entertaining activities<sup>10</sup>, it even is not use in agriculture. It is an instrument of political power and as that instrument it is improved and its functionality is strengthened. Moreover technology is used to military and genocidal purposes (publicly performed hanging of 'criminals') however, as we know it (from Smith's notes or 'Goldstein's book') it is an illusion that is to hold citizens in the state of permanent fear, and on the other side, criminal activity of the Party focused on ordinary citizens (bombing of some areas, destroying consumer goods, wasting results of human work, wasting money). (Przywara 33-34)

Since in Oceania the 'norm' was surveillance, aided by technology, anyone and everyone practised this feat or were mould in practising, through their constant dwelling in this routinised and technology-oriented system. As we see, technology if not possessing the 'ability' makes grounds for the possibilities of 'moulding'. It is thus seen from the facts that the dystopian novels have allegorical implications which have a bearing for what is to come, like George Orwell's novel was an allegory of totalitarianism and control, while Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is deemed as an allegory that foresaw the 'cancel culture'.

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## **The Tussle between the Society and the Artist, Mezghebe through Ideas in Haile's *Is He Mad?***

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**Abstract:** This paper probes the conflict between the two societies and the artist in *Abidu Do Tiblwo (Is He Mad)* published in Tigrinya, 1963, one of the Eritrean languages by Beyene Haile. The story takes place in a small town called Adi-Grat, an (Ethio-Eritrean border) and Asmara (Eritrea's capital city); and it is told from three different perspectives, based on the memories and recollections of those who knew the artist during his lifetime. The novel has reflected two societies: the emigrant family as one society that accepts changes and the Adi-Grat's society that hardly welcomes the new introductions made by the son of the emigrant family through art. The tussle is purely between artist and society, though it may be interpreted in between the societies. Most importantly, the paper on its way attempts to shed light on two different societies using a qualitative textual approach.

**Keywords:** Art, artist, culture, tradition, society.

### **Introduction**

Beyene Haile Kasa, a multifaceted artist, and philosopher, has made significant contributions to literature with his thought-provoking modern philosophy. Hailing from Eritrea, he is not only an accomplished writer but also an accomplished painter and sculptor, showcasing his creative prowess across various artistic mediums. His fame may be more prominent within Eritrea than on the international stage. Haile's literary works transcend linguistic barriers, as he fearlessly publishes in native languages, enriching the cultural and literary landscape of his homeland. His modern literary pieces captivate readers, delving into profound philosophical themes that resonate deeply with his audience. Girmay Negash, the critic, the author and the essayist describes Haile in his essay called 'A Great Novel in a "Small" Language: Representations of the African Intellectual in the Eritrean Novel *Tebereh's Shop*'; attests to his importance and says that Haile "is, arguably, the country's most important contemporary writer" (Negash 2009, 2) Although he may not be widely recognized beyond Eritrea, scholars acknowledge his undeniable influence and consider him a key figure in African literature.

Haile's passion for the arts began at a young age, and he displayed his talent through various mediums, including poetry, novels, paintings, essays, columns, plays, and sculptures, writing in Tigrigna. According to Ali Jimale Ahmed, Haile is considered a modernist writer. From 1963 to 2006, Haile published three books (*Abidu do Tiblwo, Duquan Teberih, and Tisbit Bahgu*), and in 2008, he wrote an unpublished play titled *Wegie Lebi (Heart to Heart Talk)*. He is highly esteemed for his ability to present

diverse ideas in all of his works. As the most prominent writer in Eritrea, Haile's unique style has left a lasting impact on his nation's literary landscape. Through his writings, he offers insights into the future generation of Eritreans, making him an influential figure for years to come.

### **Reading *Is He Mad?***

*Is He Mad?* as a unique work of fiction, puts readers into confusion due to its intricate narration, unusual presentation of writing, and stream of consciousness. The novel, as in "A History of Tigrinya Literature in Eritrea: The Oral and the Written 1890-1991, by Ghirmai Negash" says that Haile "has affinities with Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" (Ahmed 62). That is why the novel remains "an exceptionally difficult read" (Negash 1999, 157). In fact, there were some other factors that made the novel unreadable at the time. Tej N. Dhar who is the renowned critic in his essay titled "The Novelist v/s the Critic: Beyene Haile and the strange case of *Is He Mad?*" forwards the people "were under the colonial yoke, a passive generation was incapable of understanding and appreciating what was new and revolutionary in spirit" (Dhar 3).

The novel, which is written when Haile was seventeen years old, a group of Eritrean intellectuals who live abroad are on their way back to their home land. Some of them prefer direct flight, while others, such as Tekali who is the implied author in the book and is the fiancée of Kidsty (a sister of the giant protagonist); and the other two engineers, Fisiha and Kiflom, planned their return through the sea. However, they ought to wait until they have spent five days in Italy waiting for the ship. Soon after, they got the chance to tour the historical places, including the museum of Bella Arte, which is a place where world-renowned works of art gather. Then, while they were looking at the artist's famous miraculous works, Kidsty suddenly went faint. Meanwhile, all her crews didn't understand what had happened to her. Later, when the group has started the voyage, Kidsty has been forced to tell about the thing that immersed her into a coma when she noticed her brother's work in the museum. Through her memories, she has told them about their lives when they were in Adigrat, and she reminds her fiancé that if he is eager to know or write about Mezghebe's life and his works, he must meet her aunt, Tebe, who knows more about Mezghebe's later life in Asmara. And it is then, Tekali writes the story of the extraordinary young artist.

The tragic story reveals the confrontation between society and the artist, which is symbolically represented by the characters in the novel. The antagonist characters like Hagos and his close relatives denote the unchanged traditional society. Finally, neither the antagonists nor the protagonist remain alive in the story. Such circular plot structure presentation in work of fiction was not published in Eritrea to the readers. Therefore, this new introduction to the readers' experience might be the other reason for the author's hibernation from literary writing for over 40 years. In terms of structure, Girmay Negash in *A History of Tigrinya Literature in Eritrea*, has stated that Haile has crafted the book with "flashbacks,

digressions, and fragmented chunks of information.” (Negash 160) Although the “memories” (Negash 160) of the characters play an important role in making the book coherent; the implied author in the book makes contacts only with his wife, Kidsty, and her aunt Tebe. The other characters’ (Mezghebe, Captain Berhe, Ghebre, Hagos, Zaid, Meraf, etc.) portions are mostly told through Kidsty’s, Tebe’s (her maid, Biri), and at the end, the implied author, Tekali's, at the Garden of Wisdom. Amanuel has expressed his feelings with a paragraph at the end too. Moreover, the book is narrated from all vantages. The embedded symbolism, memories, metaphoric expressions, allegories, premonitions, linguistic, signals, and confrontations... also play a role in making the book unique and difficult to understand.

The author has also thrown away the cliché use of characters, which is new and another important creative aspect. Readers were tired to see ordinary human characters on other books acting like beggar, prostitute, detective, war hero, criminal, helpless child, simple man or woman, etc. as protagonists. No single Eritrean author has yet shown an artist hero character like Mezghebe, who devotes all his life to the search for truth, beauty, and art. Despite what theme the book carries through the artists characters (Tekali and Mezghebe), this was a difficult test to comprehend for readers, for artists always forward and comment on their ideas, thoughts, and new ways of reading their environment. Most likely, this could be the reason for the book's unreadability. The songs that the artist sings are unheard, though they are sweet ones; they certainly call for such vital works of insanity.

All in all, both the author and the artist in *Is He Mad?* try to create a society that gives respect to art. Haile, through the book, challenges and questions the readers’ experience as the artist in the book aims to object to society for its old and unchanged practices. That society is the society of the artist, which interprets life in opposition to the artist. Failing to understand, society tries to sweeten its routine life by throwing art, beauty, love, equality, progress, and so on far behind. And the artist seems to believe that these old thoughts should be renewed if and only if the people come to understand the worth of art. Mezghebe, as the leading man, carries this objective revealing his true self and identity through art, though he dies at a tender age as he has been created in the novel. “Mezghebe belongs to the entire world” (108).

### **The Tussle between the Society and the Artist**

Mezghebe, an artist character in the story, fundamentally belongs to Asmara, Tsada Kirstian, a place in Eritrea. Along with his small family, he emigrated to Adigrat, Ethiopia, while he was a child. There in the town, the inhabitants are, however, totally encircled:

If you look at Adi-Grat widely, and the wide one narrowly, in short, you can look at it as a platter. In the belly of the platter, there is the city center. The marginal headlands are large mountains that are remarkable in shape and appearance. (27)

Many are poor and traditional, with a large family. Almost all the relatives of the artist or the emigrant ones who have close contact with the artist's family are either rich, educated, have a profession, job or think highly of themselves because of the exposure. The closed family of Adi-Grat, however, is contrary to the aforementioned family, and they seem to be passive. In addition, both families share the same cultural practices and religious beliefs; and they also speak a common language that only differs in dialect. Despite what brings them together, they are from different ancestral linages, and because of that, the people of Adi-Grat seem to have a sense of locals and non-locals, as the priest character, Terfu has hissed out in the story.

Amanuel's family is an immigrant family that Mezghebe has belonged to. This nuclear family has a servant and a maid (Meles and an unnamed maid), basically from the Adi-Grat, traditional poor and closed society, who have little or no role at all in the development of the story. They are simply tertiary characters; the book shows the distinction between the locals and the emigrant society. Thus, the prominent competitors of the artist who represents the uninfluenced society are Hagos, priest Terfu, and his son Teka; Amanuel and Mebrahtom are essentially friends from their childhood, and now both have established families; they have started living in Adi-Grat with their children Mezghebe Amanuel and Kidsty Amanuel as siblings, and Zaid Mebrahtom. Together, the fathers have jobs working as civil servant and businessman, respectively.

Adi-Grat is purely a source of inspiration for the artist, of course, there could be uncountable sources of inspiration. As some may be influenced by the situation in which they live, by the environment, by far planets, objects, land, water bodies, the moon and stars, friends, and what not (i.e., nature). According to Preble et al., "Nature is the source of all inspiration" (269). Whether the artist works either directly from nature, from memory, or from something else, nature is always the source of his creative impulses. Mezghebe is also inspired and tried to evoke that in the real world by combining both the inner and outer feelings.

The society that creates barriers for the artist is represented by the aforementioned three characters. The artist seems to have decided to fight against them till they get to know the truth. That truth is, therefore, art to Mezghebe. In fact, though the locals have put more pressure on the artist by rejecting his dreams and arts, to a lesser degree, the emigrant family also fails to understand him fully. Because they think always about establishing a family and rearing children, or studying for a higher education and having a good job. Starting from his early ages, he has had an interest in painting and sculpture, and now he plans to make himself busy on the works of art that he believes are "important to me"(97). He, as a giant dreamer, starts collecting white pieces of rock with his sister before he begins schooling after his father is returned from duty after a long absence.

Even though he was a child of seven years, he had the positive quality of sensing nature and his environment. Owing to such experiences, he becomes creative and an innovator. He, initially, produces numerous works of sculpture, but later he starts to paint and think differently like his creator Haile. In contrast to Mezghebe, the society thinks about how to gain and get profit in life. “When the river dries, the people who were watching on the sidelines rush to race for stumps. Some rejoice that they have stumps to burn for a whole month” (15). Far from the physical confrontation between the society and the artist, at the early stage, the conflict leads to learning more about the mental make-up of the society. Mezghebe regularly thinks about love, beauty, truth, and art from the very beginning. Because, if he does not come from a prestigious family, he has grown up in a middle-class family; his family has shown him love and told him he is valuable. For example, as his father has taken him to the Agazi and has told him, “I want you to learn and become a very great person for me because education is very useful for human beings” (9-10), his mother also shows him her love and kisses his beautiful cheeks, “You've been my great man, you're the one who's guarding our house” (9). However, Terfu and his son Teka have grown up with different moods about life. The author presents:

The house nearest to Mezghebe's working place was that of a notorious priest named Terfu. His son Teka who was famous for his arms, strength, running, and jumping, was the only one who would not fight and knock down a man who claimed to be me; Terfu trusted him. (65)

The second point of difference probably comes from their acculturation. Hagos, Terfu, and Teka as a whole are force oriented people, which is to say that Mezghebe “saw the priest coming with a rope to grab him” (105) and rush to be rich as well. What they need is to be famous in their town. Hagos shares his thoughts with Mezghebe when they were both looking at Adi-Grat from a distance and says, “I would build a very nice house for myself after I entered the houses and stole all their money from these rich people like Mebrahtom and Mohammed in Adi-Grat” (16). His mental psyche is embedded with violence, hatred, selfishness, etc.

Due to this reason, Mezghebe has become a victim; and three things have remained printed in his mind as a scar. Hagos is the enemy of him who has already shaken the endurance of Mezghebe. The pressure imposed on the artist by Hagos, for example, by stealing Mezghebe's lover, Zaid, is also something that reflects the norms and the acculturation. Hagos, the trumpet blower, yells “Tralaalaa” frequently in Mezghebe's ear, which implies naivety and aggression on the part of the doer. Interestingly, the prime event that broke his sister's leg during the ritual of flag lowering is the scary assault that drives the artist into a conflict. More than these, the thwarting and the claiming of priest Terfu for Mezghebe and the mountain (he regards the mountain as his sculpture workshop) worsen the situation. Owing to these,

Mezghebe has come to know that most people are not good. As in *Is He Mad?* the artist character describes:

Man's behaviors are countless! There are some classmates who have studied with you for six or seven years and still they never become your friends, or they don't joke with you at all. They say only good morning or good evening, nothing else. There are some who meet you today, get along with you tomorrow, fall in love with you the day after tomorrow, fight with you the day that follows, and then become your bloodthirsty. (10)

As a result, he becomes sensitive and stops interacting, even with his family and relatives, but he still continues painting, as those are the only mediums he uses to avenge the society around him. He appears to be determined to change society through his work. In doing so, Mezghebe has moved up against society gradually. At the initial stage of his art, he has produced clear images of well-known people, animals, and other objects. But when the society has been provoked and grown the contention, Mezghebe has engaged in his abstract painting or sculpture that drives horror over the observers. That is to say, if Hagos has created any problem for him, immediately Mezghebe has painted something unusual and hidden. The feedback has simply spread through the people around him to his enemies or to the society indirectly. For example, Mezghebe has produced one that puts into anxieties, "A sheep snatches a human child or infant..." (109). Signaling that thwarting the right path leading to success is hurtful. Ghebre who is the only friend of Mezghebe belongs to Adi-Grat says, "There is one superpower in him. I can't sculpt like what he has done even if I studied for a thousand years" (43). Indirectly, admitting the incapability of society by comparing it with the artist and announcing the tussle in between.

Another point of difference between society and the artist is the way they dream, which can be regarded as a source of conflict and tussling. The extraordinary men as a whole, and Mezghebe in particular, have different dreams from the ordinary ones, in their society. He lives in his own world of art. Unlike him, his community is preoccupied with external beauty, luxury, and routine. He remains true to his desires. As in *Is He Mad?* Mezghebe thinks "about colors, different colors dissolved in a big container, I was drawing from that container with black color..." (22) to paint the sky. Right from the very start, Mezghebe's thoughts are gigantic. In his mind, the questions of prestige, status, and comfort have no space at all. Any profession other than art is meaningless to him. For instance, though his family waits for him to be a doctor, he tells them that he never wants to be a doctor, a farmer, a merchant, a judge. "Even if I were a thief, how could I carry the entire goods? That has always puzzled me always" (21). But he prefers to own and live longer with the white rocks and white quarry. Disliking the commercial based life of society, which is full of dos and don'ts.

The attitude of these people towards art and artists is nebulous. They consider the profession

lunacy. It is absurd to see a full time artist during that era. They mostly engage in collecting big wood or stumps after the flowing river (in Adi-Grat) has dried rather than celebrating the arts. Mezghebe, however, erupts from the core of this society, aiming to climb his mountain of sculpture. For example, the tender artist dreams of the power of imagination and creativity to present valuable artistic work. Though Mezghebe attempts to remake the society of this time, for example with Kidsty, “we felt relieved. We both talked about the forest in front of us, about the flowers, about the little, beautiful animals, and something else that seemed new to us” (21); some people, like priests Terfu, Teka, and Hagos, however, remain unchanged and stand in front of him, trying to thwart him. The society has always been occupied with evil thoughts and dreams. Hagos says, “It would be nice to have a bulletproof vest, so some wouldn't shoot and kill you when you're flying” (16). He said to Mezghebe. But at that time Mezghebe has dreamt that “how wonderful it would be if you could fly with your loved one, isn't that true?” (16).

In similar fashion, Mezghebe excavates the thoughts that are hidden not only from the hearts of his society but also from their eyes. The society revolves around a routine life instead of seeing things through. As in the story, the people always think of becoming a doctor or a judge, and sometimes some of them get engaged in robbery or look for higher education abroad while the ladder of elitism falls under their knees. And that is why, while he was passing through the piazza at the time of flag lowering, he was inviting all the people to break the silence and approach the life of eternity and truth, which is art, by holding steps and carrying white stones. Definitely, he, as a clever boy, knows something will come towards them, and that should be considered a sacrifice. He might be certain that art requires life and ask for something of greater value than life. He knows the breath of that society. This is then the first place to innovate, and that scary incident can be taken as purely a fight. He soon receives heed from the people. They start talking about his gut. “Here he is, this is he, the little boy who is walking with the man” (9). But they could not say any more beyond that. Perhaps Mezghebe at that time was washing impure thoughts and developing clean habits and perspectives for the society. He believes art is the long path and that problems can only be solved through it.

Another important point is that Mezghebe always gives a deep reading to things or objects. Since the beginning of his childhood, he has appreciated nature and tried to talk with it; sometimes he has even tasted the small white stones. According to the author, as in his second novel, he says, “If man stops appreciating or wondering, he is totally dead; nothing is left except a grave” (Haile, Duquan Teberih 1). The stones, the green areas, the doves, the setting, the dark color, and what not can be among the many things that Mezghebe has been attracted to. All these things are beautifully seen with his eyes. As stated in the author's third novel, eyes are the windows (mirrors) of facts and truth; and truth is art.

But yet the society of the Adi-Grat is encircled by mountains. They have only one place called

Gogol Natsa, which is the heart of routine life for the unchanged people only. They don't notice any other way of looking and living even inside that setting. The artist comes into conflict with them just to read and imagine something else. Eventually, he forces people to think and talk about him and his imaginations or his works. Thus, as stated above, we find two kinds of society in the book. On the one hand, there are people who die with their old benefits and unchanged practices, and on the other hand, there are the people who accept and understand the artist's track of prosperity. Mezghebe, therefore, has imposed fruitful thoughts and ideas, and in addition to that, he has created an imagined society.

Mezghebe has come into conflict with the society for he sees and presents things differently in his paintings. He usually paints things that drive his attention forward. To list some of his examples, there are a naked boy in a boat, a man holding a fig, an old nun, a sexy prostitute lying on the bed, beggars, a chariot man, camel owners, pedestrians, building and house designs, an abstract image of somebody covering themselves with candles, his mother Meraf, the beautiful prostitute, human blood, and other abstract paintings such as a ship snatching an infant and a crowd of men, women, and children escaping from a dove... These works mostly reflect the citizens' apparent lives at that time. Through them, readers understand and read the socio-economic activity of the society of the 1940s and perspectives towards their life style. Apart from this interpretation, the young painter's beliefs and that work reminds him of his way of understanding.

Mezghebe, through his paintings, criticizes and confronts strongly his society as he has painted the abstract works. Particularly, those abstracts reveal the high tensions between them. For instance, people in the 1940s were living in a "cave". They did not breathe the air of change, freedom and hardly accepted the new innovations. Their mind is capable of calculating nothing. If accidental new explorations of life exist or happen, they prefer to run away from them. The "dove" that has approached them describes the impure thoughts of society. Likewise, they tried to distract or evacuate the explorers like Mezghebe from the crust like what the sheep has done in the painting, snatching the infant that symbolizes the innocent who has been victimized. While the society thwarts Mezghebe in all the ways he plans to move, as a fighter, he tries to pull them out of their ignorance or uncultured culture. Hagos and prince Terfu in the novel represent a totally undeveloped, immature society, while the rest of the characters, like his family and Tebe, can be called as a semi developed society but still need to become what the artist dreams and tussles for, future society. Mezghebe has never satisfied with materialistic values and possessions. He, as a young man, doesn't want to dress up in highly fashionable clothes and shoes, though others do. One day, his aunt took him to a boutique to buy clothes. However, he prefers only one—neither a suit nor a coat. That is him. To him, it seems that a change of diet will not help a man. Hagos, his arch-enemy, wears a bracelet (silver) and a necklace (Gold). Earthly precious things to Mezghebe are farfetched; in contrast, he has



worked on important things day and night for over six years. By changing his behavior, it shows that he gets into a big conflict with society, and the move from Tebe's villa to his own simple rented room can be taken as evidence.

Terfu also stands against the will of Mezghebe. He calculates his life in terms of private possessions. He claims the stone quarry as the heritage of his forefathers. Though Mezghebe works in that place carrying a "lantern", Terfu never realizes the message of the artist. Instead, he accuses him of theft and tries to distract him. In fact, the lantern was lit during the day for all the people of Adi-Grat as he was taken to the police station. That is to say, to awaken from insanity. Mezghebe reveals the fear of the people to accept the new innovations in one of his abstract works. He reflects "a crowd of people, women, men, and children. They were afraid of the flying dove that was approaching them, and they were rushing, not knowing where they could escape." (109) Mezghebe is grown among this kind of people, who don't understand what is good and what is bad. Such thing is prevalent for the people who have a colonized mind; and subsequently many are victimized. The artist, thus, can be taken as the panacea of society. Though he is 'almost like an insect biting at the skin of an elephant,' he has not been described as a simple fighter. After he has killed again the notorious priest at the mountain, he expires early, releasing Adi-Grat.

As the story was written during the time of urbanization in Eritrea, for example, prostitution was one of the things that was introduced. The society of that time historically, and even as in the story, it was something most people hated as a practice and habit. Society has not welcomed that gradual influence. Instead, many were excommunicated and treated badly. The artist, Mezghebe, has viewed it differently. He has accepted and respected any human as human despite his or her doings. He has made contacts with such sorts of people, particularly prostitutes. Finally, He bore a son from her (unnamed character in the story) that reminds the society not to reject the new changes and spoil individual freedom. The artist, thus, has started to get into conflict even with the influenced society, his family and relatives.

Overall, the novel shows two sorts of society. The Adi-Grat society is totally traditional and conservative. The other society, which has so many advantages over the traditional one, is somehow close to the artist. As that society seems semi modern, they have a good way of understanding education; "If you go to her house, you will find her playing the piano, reading a book, and gardening" (81). More than anything, that society's members are professionals; they have a fair understanding of art and artists, they are economically privileged, and they are also good at family management. Most of the families that are referred to in this society are nuclear families that have either one or two children or none at all. But still, they have some remains that connect them with the traditional society of Adi-Grat. Thus this society, like the Adi-Grat society, sees and interprets things from an external perspective as well. "I didn't find Mezghebe to be like what I thought before. If I told him to learn how to drive, he would refuse me and say

he wouldn't like it" (88). It seems that is not an issue for him; though Mezghebe, according to Preble et al., is "fascinated with the life of the street" (357). In contrast, he has a particular interest in studying people of striking appearance, either very beautiful or ugly. Mezghebe found ugliness to be as worthy of attention as beauty. In fact, he considers ugliness a variation of beauty. Through that unique idea, the artist has still fought against his society to adjust their outlook. What he knows before and after his life in Adigrat and Asmara is that all his friends are humans. In any case, he doesn't treat people by the way they look or the things they have. He used to go with Ghebre in Adi-Grat, who is from that poor traditional society that has nine children. Ghebre is the only son who could go to school out of the entire family. Moreover, Ghebre has worn the same old, tattered coat for all his life, but finally he became a man with a good position in Addis Abeba. Similarly, the servant of the Mezghebe family, Meles, is from a poor family in Adi-Grat. He has good contact with the artist during his stay. By the same token, Mezghebe has continued to live and become friends with everybody that gives him comfort in his life and art. So in his later stay with the influenced or urbanized society in Asmara, everybody that has a striking appearance like beggars, old men and women, children, prostitutes, and what not. That is why finally he decides to live with that prostitute and have a boy child in order to wash away the impure thoughts and unfair practices and treatments of the society, like those of his rich and educated aunt, Tebe, after he told her that he would not go for further education somewhere abroad. Mezghebe has tussled with ideas about his two societies that are set in two different settings.

In the end, after all the conflicts have settled and the antagonists with their outdated ideas have vanished, Adi-Grat stands adorned with its untouched natural beauty. Mezghebe, finally sure of his convictions, reveals the long-hidden secrets of his workshop, symbolizing the need for awareness and enlightenment during the daytime. He urges people to break free from the shackles of ignorance. The article delves into the artist's profound understanding of his own identity and the society he envisions, despite grappling with internal conflicts regarding his existence and growth.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Mezghebe emerges as a multifaceted character embodying the essence of a fighter, dreamer, artist, and innovator. His journey is one of self-discovery, battling against societal norms that fail to recognize the true power of art as a transformative weapon. Despite facing resistance and arrogance from an unchanged society bound by outdated practices, Mezghebe remains resolute in his pursuit to guide and enlighten them through his art. Throughout the article, readers witness the artist's relentless struggle to break free from the confines of conventionality and push the boundaries of artistic expression. His dreams and insights act as beacons, illuminating a path towards a more enlightened society. Mezghebe's artistic endeavors become a medium for challenging the status quo, for inspiring change, and for breaking

the chains of ignorance.

In the face of adversity, Mezghebe remains undeterred, for he understands the power art possesses to liberate minds, transcend limitations, and instigate progress. As an artist, he becomes a catalyst for transformation, dismantling the barriers of tradition and paving the way for a more open-minded and liberated society. Mezghebe's journey epitomizes the struggle of every visionary artist, who, despite the challenges, believes in the profound impact of their art on shaping a better future. His story reminds readers of the profound potential that lies within art and the unwavering determination required to challenge the rigidity of society and unleash the true power of creativity for the greater good.

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## **A Burning World**

**Tania Alphonsa George**

Effigy is still burning-  
As burning houses,  
In midst of sacrilege and sleeping deities.

As drifted buildings –  
Bricks made of sweat and gold.  
Torn apart in torrents.  
With nowhere to call a home.

As the broken spirit even in darkness.  
Calls out to a blissed out Absolute,  
Whose cradle is the matrix.  
The playground of the universe-  
And from the atom of destruction,  
Rises the creation from dust to dust.  
Ashes to the earth

Not another Hiroshima, nor a sobbing Nagasaki.  
To man's wrath : now nature commune to destroy.  
Everything in her path.  
The great purification is here.

## The Escape

Srishti Raturi

I heard some footsteps making an escape,  
panting, dragging, ceasing, making their way.  
Where shall we go? Is there any home?  
We don't feel to be here anymore.  
I ran downstairs towards the door,  
screamed – there is no escape!  
But the inner conscience cried – evade!  
foreseeing everything I felt numb  
future prospect seemed blank, and yet to be succumbed.  
Shadows from each side were all along  
blurred figures lined in sighs forgone.  
Like an ambush, silent yet foreground  
feelings were unspoken, buried yet announced.  
Pride, hate, wrath wrapped us,  
creating adust landscape of our unconscious.  
Unbound humanity was chained in beliefs  
every bright hour the darkness pressed hard  
The World piercing through unseen holes of certainty.

Alas! Nothing I could do to make the gateway  
These void self prolonged in window panes,  
it isn't a trap plunged beneath the surface  
It's the escape making its way.

## **The Fallen Angel**

**Dr A. Raihana Barvin**

Before the fiery self,  
Behind the anger-blinded eyes,  
There is nothing to judge.  
Whoever you are but only just thorns to fire.  
The delusive eyes are always ready to accuse.  
Whether it is black or white, those will twist just as red.  
Though the dews are being spread  
To placate the sullen self, it is seen as chilling to kill.  
The well-dumped pains  
Started bursting out,  
Nothing in this world dares to face,  
From the head to the toe,  
Filled with only hellish hatred-ness.  
With a crowded mind and a blinded sense,  
Blasting everywhere and dashing everything,  
As an aggressive animal, or as an arrogant sea,  
She tore down my lovely garden.  
The precious plants, trees, beautiful flowers, and fruits,  
For those, I laboured a lot to make it grow  
Against all the external storms and frosts,  
Are now burnt with the sighs of this fallen angel.  
The blazing fire around the nether region,  
The acidic tears of those seething embers,  
The unexpected flounders of those protracted tribulations,  
And the aversion to the weakness of love and peace,  
They find no more space for stoicism  
Thus blasts to burn whatever comes in its way.

Burnt everything, still not relaxed,  
Turn to dig out the roots, shredded, and throw them into the air.  
At last, after spoiling and burying everything perfectly,  
The forbidden old spirit sneaked in.

Without disturbing the dying fallen angel,  
It slowly claims its throne to rule the self.  
Wakes all the dead senses,  
Makes them look at their world.  
Their impatient searches find nothing  
Other than the complete decay.  
Throwing the light aside, the swollen blindness took its prey.  
The fallen angel won the battle,  
No thorns and no plants, trees, flowers, fruits, or birds too,  
As a stormy wind swipes out the land, she dashed out the whole.  
WON yet LOST everything.

## Sojourn

Sheena Sarah Winny

Tossed right! Tossed left! Oh...annoying it was. The tolling of church bells was relief. The cot stabilised – or was it my mind. Calculated moves, preparation unprecedented, I decided to blurt out...I am sick. The reverberation induced slumber; the next moment I was on support; not necessarily due to motor incapacitation, but exhaustion. Deserted examination room with white clad angels; the digital numbers were soaring – at the peak it ceased. A room with two window panes opening to a maintenance corridor; ventilation nowhere. Huddled up to one edge, cramped to contain the discomfort, I turned to the infotainment module with hope. There came images of desolate helplessness – migrations, closures, despair. What am I to watch? I befriended slumber again.

The heat was unbearable – undesirable burning of the senses. The windows opened to a whizz of breeze; musty smell of birds kissed my nose. My alter ego seemed to fare well. The room had to be refurbished; or should I vacate it – indecision galore. Looking for an option I peered across the corridor, to find light oozing out of a door ajar. Selection made: I walked in, stayed on the side, jumped on to the new throne. Again two window panes; but this time opening to the light of the day. Sunny day invited fluttering rays of hope into an unsettled-line. The little menace which had been away since two days, got caressed by my fingers again. Touch! the ultimate soothing experience took me into its grip, from screen to screen, pixels of bonding, shattered into shades of loneliness. Gathering hues and gems, I journeyed the cyber world, in search of the familiar, leading me into void.

Was it to stay? NEVER. Will it stay? NEVER.

Riding on the pillars of balance, day turned to night; white turned to red. Small pellets of health incorporated, diminished in count. Hypothetically I was on my own. Ha! Life is not a bed of joyful beads; it is more of a thorny cradle rocking the sap out of sanity. The little giant had engulfed the world. Terror struck in the hearts of trillions, resources exhausted and life compartmentalised.

On a warm afternoon after four days of observation, I savoured lunch in the safety of home. Prescriptions and protocols were in place. I decided to rebuild the lost legacy of energy. It took days to come to terms with the new me, the new world, and the new life. Thoughts reeled over and over; cares of the night cast away with the dawn. Looking outside, the trend seemed anew. Walkers scanty on the pavements, nature was in full bloom. Fresh air was not a luxury any more. The flip side was nightmarish.

The lockdown seemed never ending. Traffic eased, reduced to naught. The OTP became the lifeline. Staying indoors, awaiting delivery, I mused over an artwork. Water, almond shells, gum, shiny strings and a transparent box – all it took was fifteen minutes. I was once again the artist I always dreamt of being. My



interests are short-lived; but fidelity - lifetime. Indecision hovered again, curtailed by the spirit of 'never give up.'

The offer came, along with a gift box of expensive red apples.

Now when I look back, it was a mistake to accept the offer. Why did I trade off peace for something as trifling as betterment? The trail of consent, still stifles me. To move on is the only way out; to be precise wade through. A comfy corner seat, overlooking a vista of greenery, garnished with rhythm and colour, I started enjoying the wilderness of absolute unpreparedness.

'Okay! lets battle it out', my soul called out.

Routine slowly changed to the extent of divorcing the friendly alarm clock. Now when I look back two years down memory lane, the early morning 'ring and snooze' is a huge missing, or rather a smooth transformation, a kind of mid-year NEW YEAR RESOLUTION. Ha! wonderful to contemplate on things manifold, aliens at first, now integral to life. I have resigned to the fact that slowly the strangeness will subside and the new normal will be mine too. Preparing to study the pros and cons of the position I am in, I was confronted with conventions of comfortable work mode adamant to embrace novelty.

The news of ease of restrictions fell upon many ears as golden words. Life had to pick up from where it was stalled. The usual sights and sounds were still distant; but yes, birds were singing happily and nature adorned with humble beauty; decided to hit the road with a friend. Though not a camper, I ventured out to witness the mettle, latent in me. Short steps turned into strides. My tall friend (of yesteryears) had a very elegant stride which I was envious of. Now it was my turn to gather elegance and walk the rough life.

Stumbling upon the stones of uncertainty, the journey progressed through a lane lined with setaria glauca. The creamish yellow ones were common. The deep pink-red variant caught my attention. Never had I seen those, ever. The riot of colours brightened my soul. The russet resembled that of the red okra growing profusely in my backyard. The rain had made the stagnant water bodies vibrant again; until someone dumps rubbish, it will remain thus. At one point I was reminded of a poem by Atwood, which cautions people not to get lost in thoughts, as it may pose hindrance in restoring normalcy. Taking a deep breath, we floated on the skates of freshness. A person or two, accidentally would come across, masked, silent and rigid. 'To be or not to be'.... Shakespeare had said it right.

The small steep was challenge enough - after long weeks of 'stay home stay safe' ritual, the tendons were lazy (maybe we were). Peacocks, cattle and parrots ruled the world. Indoors, humanity kept to its bounds. We peered through an opening to see what was in store on the other side. A house under construction, marred by cobwebs and regression, intimidated us. Retreat was imminent. Back on the track, the fallen leaves rustled under our feet. A snake zigzagged my path, lest I stamped on it. The tick-tick reminded me that the time has come – maturation was on cards.

The yellow caravan stood there – gigantic – inevitable ingredient in the race of life. When it starts to roll, the reel moves from point to point, taking within its fold, the tediousness of an upward climb. A sojourn is welcome. I weighed the boons and banes, to fall asleep, till a church bell tolled again. This time, the mind stabilised, not the seat. Hot-seats are not meant for poise.

Migratory birds forayed the damp expanse. Dotted white with flamingo slender bodies, the pink hue lined the steel grey feathers. The caravan window slid with great difficulty to unleash the breeze in. Few years ago I was travelling on a coach, when it caught up exorbitant speed to dishevel the composure. The thought made me nauseous, that I changed direction (emotionally) to enjoy the Winchester landscape, with yellow rapeseed flowers growing profusely. Ah! marvellous the mental journey was. Squeaking of the metal awakened me from the reverie. Another unpredictable obstacle had manifest. Aircrafts were grounded still; humanity fettered.

On my table, a pristine white tea cup solemnly sat with floral fragrance. Afternoon tea party images flashed before my eyes. Not that those parties were my favourites, but somehow I had a fancy for everything English. ‘Forget it’, I told myself, and turned to the keys to fill the screen with words. An empty cup won’t give ideas.

Sitting down to take deep breaths, the lawn outside seemed inviting. With soft steps I ventured out to feel the green. The firmament, arch-like, gleamed with silken blue-white clouds. The fish pond was buzzing with tiny inmates darting in all directions. The green-blue-water combo instilled a lush yearning in me to return to my abode, reminiscent of me. I rushed back in to check whether connectivity was restored. The voices on the other end of the device were feeble and shaky. ‘When will normalcy be restored’, I murmured.

Bracing up for yet another ‘session’, I flipped the pages of the edited volume and also checked for the functionality of screen sharing. Everything in place, the outcome will be just an hour of communion. Pixels controlled lives; the digital-organic divide, blent into reality. Dollops of smile(y)s landed on the screen, hinting the end.

Turning my attention back to god’s bounty, I started deciphering the shape formation of the clouds. Life too had changed its shape. The unseen enemy had taken over. The yellow caravan was waiting and I hopped in. Passing by buildings and bushes and fields, the musical journey encountered the flash news of more restrictions being imposed. At two arms distance, a little boy was sleeping with his head tilted, unawares of the bumpy ride of life. Suddenly, the glass crashed, splinters in air and everything came to a halt. A way out seemed impossible.

The hot asphalt, ironically, was shelter. The bullying clouds in all shapes and sizes seemed to follow me. The onward movement gained momentum with the scattered herd watchful of humans, paced ahead.

Staring up, the clouds had started to darken, ready to wash out the pain of loneliness. A few moments later, I realised that, mine own eyes had produced the water drops. There I stood, isolated.

Nightfall, ushered in, the fear of war with perceptions. Lying on my cot, the rotation of the fan seemed to erase the unfortunate fly caught in the web made by the dexterous spider. Unable to act, I surrendered to the spell of dreams. Hovering seamlessly on the wings of dark, dawn pitched in quite early. The little bird sang very sweet; the rattling of the squirrels, crowing of the cock – it was a medley. The landlady banged the door. With immense difficulty I walked up to the door. The elegant lady was furious, because the authorities have ordered for fumigation of the entire apartment block and I had not paid the rent since three months.

Off balance, our conversation was on the argumentative side. “Find another place”, the lady commanded. My resources were meagre. I practiced the ‘silence is golden’ policy. After few minutes of horrendous exchanges, she left and I savoured a breath of virus-free air. The lay-off had brought with it exciting opportunities too. Creativity soared high to land back on the rock of boredom.

Dissatisfaction was rampant. One, two, three...the numbers started to rise, then fell, to the relief of all. The ensemble was too much to handle. Sitting at home, had to manage many things. Emptiness prevailed. Monitoring the monitors was by now a habit, rather than a necessity.

Strange stories filled intent ears. On an empty city street, a porcupine lone, ran amok. Interesting reverberations of the pandemic set in gradually. A long lost friend caught up to renew bonds. We instantly reminisced the camaraderie of undergraduate days. She said, “late night hunger and cheat’s version of slow cooked dishes”, then paused as if to give me room to speak. I could go on and on, listening to her, a virtue I am in possession of. Her world had crumbled with the onslaught of the virus. I suggested, as many others would, to keep faith. She whimpered and that ended the call.

As usual no option to fall back. Flanked by home and work, I spent days balancing both. Each day was lacklustre; yet, light at the end of the tunnel was expected.

The dreamy spell broke. Gauging stability, I rested my palms on the cot and opened eyes to a murky morning. Sunlight kissed the floor. I tiptoed to get into a comfortable groove to kick start the day. Shaking off traces of sleep, I adorned valour to fight the tantrums of stepping out into the untamed world, still at risk. I whispered, “get going.” Momentum gained. Tossed right! Tossed left!

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