INNER DESOLATION

Inner desolation, which is the theme of this study, is an innately human experience. As a mood or emotion, the experience of being desolate or depressed is at the very heart of being human. Inner desolation ranges from feeling unhappy or being dispirited or discouraged to feeling disappointed, dejected, despondent and melancholic. These are the normal ranges of desolation. Everyone suffers from this kind of mental desolation, because it is a human condition. To be melancholic or depressed does not necessarily make one mentally ill or put him in a pathological state. It is in greater degrees of its severity that a desolate person becomes depressed and despairing that he needs medical treatment. Many innovative researches on the emotion of depression have been made in cross cultural contexts in the modern Cultural Psychology. It is interesting to note here that Literary Studies too are taken into consideration, along with Psychology and Anthropology, in these researches. As Francis Zimmerman opines:

Literary studies are involved, because the most telling expressions of depression, sadness, exhaustion, consumption, loss, grief, and melancholy, are to be found in romance and poetry. Furthermore, these public expressions of affects have been shaping the cultural patterns of affect in our society. Melancholy has been shaped in the
form of a culture-bound syndrome, from Latin antiquity through nineteenth century Romanticism, in Western Europe.¹

**Inner desolation, a Historical Perspective.**

Literature, being the expression of a writer’s vision of life, reveals the multiplicity and complexity of human mind. As far back as ancient times, attempts were made to explain the mental condition of man in order to lay bare the source of human behaviour. It was Hippocrates who introduced the theory that the human body was made up of the four humours. Even before Hippocrates, both Empedocles and Pythagoras had noted similar classifications. Galen, the Greek physician was the one who popularized this linking of physical state to bodily fluids, and it was he who attributed the philosophy to Hippocrates.² The original concept was based on the assumption that the world was composed of four primary elements (earth, air, fire and water), and that these elements were reflected in the four basic fluids that flowed in various combinations in the human body – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. The ancient Greeks tried to analyse human behaviour by using this concept and they believed that a balanced proportion of these fluids in the human body determined the health of a person. Of these, black bile determined the disposition toward melancholy, which was characterized by mental symptoms like fear, depression and madness. The very word ‘melancholy’ comes from the Greek melankholia, (from melas black + khole bile)³ which means “black bile.”
Plato, in the fourth century BC identified two phases of melancholy, depending on whether the patient had too little or too much black bile—Depression and Mania. The first systematic exposition of the concept the human mind or psyche can be traced back to Aristotle, who, in his treatise “On the Soul” compared his views with those of his predecessors. In A History of Psychology, Mikhail Yaroshevsky states that Aristotle “merits a special place in psychological history, since he was the first to separate psychology off from other fields of knowledge, when he wrote a special treatise On the Soul, which included the first review of the history of Psychology.”

In the middle ages, melancholy was looked upon from a religious perspective, and was considered from two contradictory perspectives—either as evidence of a lack of grace or as the “state of grace” itself (becoming aware of one’s fallen state, reflecting on sins, etc.) depending on the attitude of the mind.

In contrast, Medieval theologians conceived of Melancholy as an illness, with only a few exceptions: To William of Auvergne, an Aristotelian, it represented a state of grace, and for Chrysostom it was a spiritual trial which only deep introspection and prayer could make bearable and even understandable. Most, like Hildegard of Bingen, reinforced the Augustinian sentiment that melancholy reflected not a state of grace but the Fall from Grace—the ultimate object of despair ... And this was not merely in describing melancholy as mental illness, but as a judgment, like God’s of Adam, of the entire temperament. Thus, melancholy became associated not
simply with day-to-day suffering, but with original sin. A competent physician could produce some relief from the pain, but the disease was incurable, hereditary, and universal. Thus, the nature of melancholy had become somewhat schizophrenic. To the Classical philosophers it was desirable; to the Medieval theologians it was anathema. This dilemma was particularly acute for followers of Plato, for whom melancholy had taken on a spiritual dimension; it was not merely good, it was divine, and yet from the Church's perspective it was Satanic. The dilemma was resolved by Ficino, ushering in almost a century of neo-Platonist revival in art and science.  

It was during the Renaissance period that Melancholy based on the ancient theory of the four humours once again gained ground among the Europeans. Renaissance writers drew from the tradition that had been developing throughout classical antiquity and the Middle Ages and thus gave melancholy the complex meanings and associations in their works. Thus melancholy became an especially fruitful subject for literature.  

Dr. Timothy Bright's Treatise of Melancholy was the most important work on Melancholy during Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare scholars claim that Shakespeare was definitely influenced by this book at the time when he was writing Hamlet. "Bright states that melancholic humors, being cold by nature, settle in the spleen which causes vapors to rise past the heart to the brain. This
process proves to be both disheartening and the cause of unreasonable behavior.”

Hamlet, the melancholic prince of Denmark, describes his mental condition thus:

I have of late – but

Wherefore I know not – lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

The conduct of Hamlet causes him to become the exact image of melancholy, as defined by the medical field over the years. Hamlet was viewed as being composed of too much black bile, which placed him as melancholic.

Melancholy was a widespread affliction in Elizabethan England; particularly amongst the educated classes. Robert Burton published the first edition of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621. This book, which treats the subject of melancholy from both a literary and a medical perspective, is considered as one of the first books on Psychology in English.

L.C. Knights in his *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* says that a particular kind of melancholy prevailed during the last years of Queen Elizabeth and the reign of James I, towards the end of which Burton's *Anatomy* appeared.
Knights associates the fascination with melancholy with two social trends that were particular to late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century England. These were the prevalence of death through plague and warfare and the failure of the society to provide occupations for its educated class. In particular, the lack of opportunities for the educated (generally men) provides one of the common faces of melancholy, and the afflicted were frequently scholars.\(^7\)

Another literary expression of melancholy can be seen in the later poetry of John Donne, where one can perceive his obsession with death. Milton, in his “Il Penseroso” chooses to live with “divinest Melancholy.”\(^8\) In the Romantic age Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Blake and Keats wrote their poems in a melancholic tone. Keats in his “Ode to Melancholy” muses thus:

\[
\text{Ay, in the very temple of Delight Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine, Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine; His soul shall taste the sadness of her might, And be among her cloudy trophies hung.}
\]

The prose fiction too took over this universal emotion of desolation even from the very beginning. A persistent note of melancholy is exhibited in almost all the novels, from Daniel Defoe's \textit{Robinson Crusoe} onwards. It is because a melancholic trait is an unavoidable aspect of creative genius.

But in the mid-19th century, a revolution took place, a revolution that had been brewing up for at least a hundred years. This revolution was Science,
based on rigorous logic, constant inquiry, and a belief in proof. It quickly overtook
the world and spread its ramifications everywhere. It had had its effects even in
Literature and Philosophy. Charles Darwin’s theory of the evolution of man had
shook the very roots of religious faith. There was a general collapse of the old
religious and ethical certainties. With this, there came into being a change in the
pattern of melancholy. Melancholy was shorn off its divinity and it no more could
remain veiled in the temple of Delight. Instead it became the source of a deep and
incurable pessimism. In spite of that, the Victorian writers managed to emerge
with their religious convictions in tact. Though they sounded their voices of doubt,
their works almost always ended in a note of optimism. In spite of the deep grief
and tormenting doubts, Tennyson, for instance, could conclude his “In
Memoriam” thus:

That God, which ever lives and loves,

One God, one law, one element,

And one far-off divine event,

To which the whole creation moves.

Even Thomas Hardy considered as the pessimistic Victorian
novelist, does not admit his pessimism Hardy states:

people call me a pessimist; and if it is pessimism to think, . . . that
‘not to be born is best,’ then I do not reject the designation. . . . But
my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption
that the world is going to the dogs. . . . On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist.\textsuperscript{9}

But, Hardy was definitely influenced by the nineteenth century philosophers, including Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Existentialism was a very vital and extensive movement in Literature and Philosophy at that time. In Russia, Fyodor Dostoevsky, the greatest existentialist literary figure was making his presence felt in the European literary scenario. An unpredictable and self-destructive view of life was thus emerging in Literature and Philosophy. Pessimism towered over the works of most of the existentialists. Friedrich Nietzsche even announced the death of God in his Madman:

"Where has God gone?" he [the madman] cried out; "I shall tell you. We have killed him --you and I have killed him. We are all his murderers. But how could we have done this? How did we manage to drink away the ocean? Who gave us the sponge with which we wiped away the horizon? ... Are we not drifting as through an infinite nothing? Who does not feel the icy breath of empty space? ... God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."\textsuperscript{10}

In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Austrian Jewish writer Franz Kafka wrote extensively on the modern malady of alienation and angst. The notion that life was essentially pointless and absurd, and that the miserable existence of man counted very little in the grand scheme of things, thus came into being. He presented before his readers a pack of alienated characters confronting the vast and menacing world before them. Worldwide upheavals, such as two world wars, the
spread of Communism and the rise and fall of Fascism also contributed to this change. Today, in the postmodern world, especially among the academic circles, the theory of deconstruction, which is a direct descendant of Nietzsche's theory of the death of God, prevails. This theory, with all the knowledge explosion it poses, finally tends to prove its lack of wisdom. Such a theory can only put one back to depression, or an imbalanced proportion of black bile!

**Inner Desolation – A Psycho- analytic View**

Desolation, as such, is a very complex experience that it cannot be explained in scientific terms. Yet, in psychoanalysis, desolation has a significant place in the scheme of things. In fact, psychoanalysis provides a sophisticated picture of the human mind. It is a method of psychotherapy as well as a theory of human personality. There are several personality-theories in psychoanalysis.

No one can question the affinity between literature and psychoanalysis because great writers have grasped the psychological phenomena in an intuitive manner. So psychoanalytical criticism has become quite valuable for understanding the fictional characters as well as the writer's vision.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to analyse the various characters in the novels of Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai, using some of the psychoanalytical theories propounded by Carl G. Jung and his associates, with a special emphasis given to the concept of individuation.
Individuation Theory

It is not easy to summarize this theory formulated by Carl Gustav Jung. It is not exactly a complete theory, it is somewhat shrouded in mysticism. Jung believed that all people throughout history have certain shared experiences, which can be called the collective unconsciousness. It is a repertoire of myth and memory and according to Jung this collective unconsciousness interferes with the personal unconsciousness in the process of personality development. A healthy personality, according to Jung, consists in a balancing between the conscious and unconscious forces in which every part of the personality grows into a fully realized self. He calls this self-actualisation as individuation.

Individuation is a development process in which the self attains perfect tranquility and in which the person becomes more uniquely individual. Once a person attains a clearer and fuller identity of his own, it enables him to utilize fully his inner faculties. Jung himself defines individuation as “a process by which a person becomes a psychological individual, that is, a separate indivisible unity or whole.” It is a painful process.

According to Jung, the human consciousness, with ego as its centre, does not constitute the psyche in its totality. “Many things occur semi-consciously, and a great many more remain entirely unconscious.” The unconscious occurrences in the human psyche is an illimitable field and there is no controlling centre for the unconscious, analogous to the ego, which is the controlling centre of the conscious self. Hence the unconscious has an irregular existence. The
manifestation of the unconscious phenomena is usually chaotic and unsystematic. To illustrate this, Jung calls our attention to our dreams, which do not have any systematic or regular existence. This proves that the unconscious has an egoless existence beneath the threshold of consciousness.

The unconscious which usually lies in a dormant state sometimes makes a surprise appearance perhaps in an "outburst of affect" which sometimes can radically change a whole situation. That is why Jung considers the unconscious as a potential reality. Mental disorder occurs when ego and the unconscious change places.

It is not advisable to try to suppress the unconscious. In fact, it is dangerous "because the unconscious is life and this life turns against us if suppressed, as happens in neurosis". The psyche which consists of the two incongruous halves – consciousness and the unconscious – can remain as a totality only when both the halves are allowed to have a chance to utilize their equal powers or rights i.e. their rationality and chaos respectively. "This means open conflict and open collaboration at once. That, evidentially, is the way human life should be. It is the old game of hammer and anvil: between them the patient iron is forged into an indestructible whole, an 'individual'." 

It is this process of harmonizing the conscious with the unconscious which Jung terms as 'individuation'. It has a 'transcendent function', which expresses itself in definite symbols. This rounding of the personality into a whole is an irrational life-process. It is a mystery, which has to be lived out, and not a
definite problem which can be solved. There is no definite theory for it, which can be written down in the form of a prescription. Yet, according to Jung, this should be 'the goal of any psychotherapy'.

**Inner Desolation: An Essential Part in the Process of Individuation**

Desolation, as such, is not negative. In fact, it is an integral part in the process of individuation or self-actualization. Only after passing through crisis situations, where the psyche experiences anxiety, conflict or anguish, can one reach the goal point of individuation. Dr. Marie Louise Von Franz of Zurich, a close professional confidante and friend of Dr. Carl G. Jung argues:

The actual process of individuation – the conscious coming to terms with one's own inner centre (psychic nucleus) or self – generally begins with a wounding of the personality and the suffering that accompanies it. This initial shock amounts to a sort of “call”, although it is not often recognized as such. On the contrary, the ego feels hampered in its will or its desire and usually projects the obstruction onto something external. That is, the ego accuses God or the economic situation or the boss or the marriage partner of being responsible for whatever is obstructing it.

Gail Sheehy in her book, *Passages – Predictable Crisis of Adult Life*, has beautifully described this phase of desolation in adult development. She compares the growing individual to a particularly hardy crustacean:
The lobster grows by developing and shedding a series of hard, protective shells. Each time it expands from within, the confining shell must be sloughed off. It is left exposed and vulnerable until, in time, a new covering grows to replace the old. With each passage from one stage of human growth to the next, we too, must shed a protective structure. We are let exposed and vulnerable — but also yeasty and embryonic again, capable of stretching in ways we had not known before. The shedding may take several years or more. Coming out of each passage, though, we enter a longer and more stable period in which we can expect relative tranquility and a sense of equilibrium regained.19

It is in the inner realm of a person’s being that such fundamental changes occur, throwing the person off balance. It is a signal showing the need for change and one has to move on to the next stage of development.

Joseph Campbell in his book, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, points out the archetypal pattern of development in the life of a mythic hero as separation, initiation and return. According to Campbell, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of a nuclear unit: “a separation from the world, a penetration of some source of power and a life-enhancing return”20. That is, the hero goes forth from his castle or palace or homeland, faces many adventurous ordeals, triumphs over evil and finally returns victoriously. The second phase, the initiation or the adventurous involvement is the phase of desolation. The mythic
hero does not succumb to the pressure of the ordeals. He fights bravely and returns, individuated as a fully integrated man.

T.S. Eliot has depicted this painful process of the inner journey of a man through periods of desolation towards the final integration, in the concluding lines of 'East Coker'.

"We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark, cold and the empty desolation
The wave cry, the wind cry the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise.
In my end is my beginning"21

An individual's psychological development begins when he moves away from the familiar, synchronistic social life, to become the different, the particular or the unique being that he is. It involves "a definite injury to individual vital activity."22 But in order to complete the process of individuation, an individual has to adapt himself to society because "an individual is not only a single, separate being, but by his very existence also pre-supposes a collective relationship ... individuation must clearly lead to a more intensive and universal collective solidarity, and not to mere isolation."23

**Inner Desolation : As a Spiritual Experience**

As a spiritual experience, desolation has been explicitly termed as "the dark night"24 of the soul by St.John of the Cross. It is considered as the
purgation or the purification process, which a soul has to undergo before reaching the state of perfection or the union with God. This is similar to Jung’s individuation theory.

In the Bible, the enigmatic author of the book of “Lamentations”, expresses the experience of desolation in a litany of extreme grief:

For these things I weep;
My eyes flow with tears:
For a comforter is far from me,
One to revive my courage
I am the man who has seen affliction
Under the rod of his wrath
He has driven me and brought me
Into darkness without any light.
“He has besieged and enveloped me
With bitterness and tribulation
He has walled me about so that
I cannot escape
He has put heavy chains on me
He led me off my way and tore me to pieces
He has made me desolate.

These most poetic dirges can be considered as the archetypal expression of the existential anguish of a desolate soul. But the prophet in the Bible does not remain stagnated in the backwaters of his mental desolation. He struggles forward, repents and turns back to his Creator and soon realizes the steadfast love of the Lord and is able to proclaim:
“... the Lord will not cast off for ever, but though he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.”

The prophet thus attains individuation through his firm act of faith in God's continuing love, power and justice. This, in fact, is the paradox of individuation. A spiritual death or disintegration is a necessary step towards the final integration. It is Thomas Merton, the Trappist Monk who calls this process as the final integration. According to Merton,

... final integration implies an openness, an 'emptiness', 'poverty', similar to those described in such detail not only by the Rhemish mystics, by St. John of the Cross, by the early Franciscans, but also by the Sufis, the early Taoist masters and Zen Buddhists. Final integration implies the void, poverty and non-action which leave one entirely docile to the 'spirit' and hence a potential instrument for unusual creativity.

The process of disintegration and re-integration involves a terrible interior solitude and an 'existential moratorium'. We cannot analyse or intellectualise this mysterious process. It is just the development of a person to his or her full ripeness. It involves a conscious segregation of the individual from the common herd.

A distinction has to be made between 'neurotic anxiety' and 'existential anxiety'. Neurotic anxiety arises out of a commitment to defeat whereas existential anxiety is positive and healthy. Merton considers it as "the
healthy pain caused by the blocking of vital energies that still remain available for radical change...which summons to growth and to painful development."

The Protagonists in the Novels of Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai remain Stagnated in their Inner Desolation

In the gloomy world of Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai, the characters rarely achieve such individuation. Most of them reach the threshold of the final integration, but they stop there, unable to make that final step towards collective solidarity. They reach the stage of initiation by becoming aware of their inner reality. They acknowledge their true selfhood but then they become narcissistically stagnant in their own inner world. Like the author of the Book of Lamentations, some of them ever try to seek a mentor or a guide to lead them out the dark night of their inner world, but in their quest they invariably get frustrated. Maya, in Cry the Peacock, yearns to get the sensation, "of walking through a dark and wet night with somebody beside me who carried a lantern, a staff and a blanket". In Woolf's The Waves, the six soliloquists try to make Parcival as their Messiah, but all of them get disillusioned with his sudden death.

The desolate individuals in the novels of Woolf and Desai make vain attempts to clutch at a straw of meaning either in a place or a person. Virginia Woolf's own attempt to regain her solidarity with life by retreating to her favourite childhood resort, St.Ives in Cornwall, has its fictional counterpart in the Ramsay family's holidaying in an island in To the Lighthouse. Even in Desai's fictional world, we meet Sita who makes a frantic self-exile into the exotic island of Malory in Where Shall We Go This Summer?
Here again, let us turn to the Jungian school of thought. According to Jung and his associates, an individual should turn inward and seek the mentor or guide within his psyche that has its nucleus, which Jung terms as the self. M.L. Von Franz defines self as:

...an inner guiding factor that is different from the conscious personality and that can be grasped only through the investigation of one’s dreams. These show it to be the regulating centre that brings about a constant extension and maturing of the personality. But this larger, more nearly total aspect of the psyche appears first as merely an inborn possibility. It may emerge very slightly, or it may develop relatively completely during one’s life time. How far it develops depends on whether or not the ego is willing to listen to the messages of the self.35

Only when man becomes aware of this inner self and be receptive to its guidance, can he grow into a more complete human being. Franz continues:

But this creatively active aspect of the psychic nucleus can come into play only when the ego gets rid of all purposive and wishful aims and tries to get to a deeper, more basic form of existence. The ego must be able to listen attentively and to give itself, without any further design or purpose, to that inner urge towards growth. Many existential philosophers try to describe this state, but they go only as far as stripping off the illusions of consciousness. They go right up to the door of the unconscious and then fail to open it.36
Most of the characters of Woolf and Desai are in this condition. They fail to open the door of the unconscious and thus become either insane or insecure. Of course, there are a few exceptions like Clarissa Dalloway (in Mrs. Dalloway), Eleanor (in The Years), Bim (in Clear Light of the Day) and Amla (in Voices in the City), who transcend into partially individuated beings by triumphantly wading through the phase of inner desolation.

**Absence of Natural Religious Function – a Cause for Desolation**

One of the main reasons why the characters of Woolf and Desai remain trapped in the labyrinth of their anguished selves, is because of their lack of faith in God or in any supreme being outside their selves. According to Jung, man possesses “a natural religious function. If this remains unfulfilled it will result in a crippling sense of meaninglessness.”

Jung is of the opinion that “in this scientific age, the psychiatrist is apt to be asked the questions that once belonged to the domain of the theologian. People feel that it makes or would make, a great difference if only they had a positive belief in a meaningful way of life or in God and immortality.”

In a letter to Pater Lucas Menz, Jung describes the process of individuation as “becoming whole and holy. This is made possible only when we “allow our ‘ego’ to be taken up into a greater dimension which dwarfs and surrounds [us] on all sides, and which we cannot grasp in its totality.” Such an experience, says Jung, “is vouchsafed only if we give up the ego as the supreme authority and put ourselves wholly under the will of God. In so far as God is
wholeness himself, himself whole and holy, man attains his wholeness only in God, that is, in self-completeness which in turn he attains only by submitting to Gods will.\textsuperscript{40}

It is from the depth of the unconscious that the inner desolation springs forth and it is necessary to pass through such affliction of the soul in order to attain wholeness.

The depth of the psyche, the unconscious, is not made by man but is divinely created nature, which should, on no account, be reviled by man even though it causes him the greatest difficulties. It's fire, which 'refines' us 'in the furnace of affliction is according to Isaiah 48:10, the divine will itself, i.e., the will of Yahweh, who needs man.\textsuperscript{41}

**Attachment to Earthy Objects – An Obstacle to Inner Tranquillity**

Even a very wise man, who strives after perfection, can be affected by his turbulent senses. He gets attached to some earthy objects and from that he ends up in desolation. *Bhagavad Gita* gives a good explanation to this:

Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed in a man. From attachment, longing, and from longing anger grows. From anger comes delusion, and from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discrimination, and from the ruin of discrimination he perishes.
But the self-controlled man, moving among objects with senses under restraint, and free from attraction and aversion, attains tranquility. In tranquility all sorrows are destroyed. For the intellect of him who is tranquil-minded, is soon established in firmness.\textsuperscript{42}

Such an individual – the self-controlled, tranquil man – is one who has acquired a basic unity within himself. He becomes a real, live and wholesome person; and he can experience an inner consistency, which is genuine and substantial.

Only a very few characters of Woolf and Desai can be said to have attained such inner tranquility. Clarissa in \textit{Mrs.Dalloway}, for instance, rejects her lover Peter because she fears that his possessive love would destroy her inner freedom and thus she might lose her autonomy of selfhood. So she rejects him and marries Richard who would give her the desired freedom and she enjoys her nun-like existence in the symbolic narrow bed in the Dalloway household. In her stream of consciousness, she muses that "there is a dignity in people; a solitude, even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect, ...for one would not part with it oneself, or take it against one's self-respect – something, after all, priceless."\textsuperscript{43}

But the individuation process is not complete in Clarissa, although she claims to have attained the autonomous selfhood to a great degree. It is to be noted here that she enjoys a vicarious pleasure as she listens to the news about the suicide of Septimus. Though Clarissa has developed herself into a hard, cold,
personality. But what she has managed to attain, after all, is a deliberate, calculated indifference like that of a stoic.

Bim in Desai’s *Clear Light of the Day*, is another character, who, like Clarissa, believes in self-sufficiency and autonomy of being. But it is only towards the end of the novel, when she finally takes the painful decision to get reconciled with her brother Raja, that she is able to attain the inner tranquility.

But Clarissa’s and Bim’s attitudes are only a kind of reluctant resignation, rather than the perfect individuation as suggested by Jung. From a modern feminist point of view, Clarissa and Bim may be said have reached the ideal womanhood.

**The Feminist Perspective**

Since both Woolf and Desai are women writers, it would be appropriate here to look at the development of their characters from a feminist perspective. Many of the modern feminist theorists oppose Freud’s choice of Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon, as the model of feminine development. *Electra* is the typical passive worshipper of patriarchy. Dr. Natalic Shainess argues:

In spelling out an ‘Electra complex’ – involving a passive, father worshipping woman – Freud again used a model of immaturity in adolescence as a symbol of adult femininity. In doing so, he froze the definition of womanhood in time, implying that every adult woman is a case of hopelessly arrested development.⁴⁴
Antigone, the True Model of Female development

The modern feminist psychoanalysts would instead prefer Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus as the true model of female development. Antigone, according to Dr. Shaines, "is an example not of difficulty, but of liberation from difficulty – an example of autonomy in a woman and something more: courage and potency – strong healthy superego and ego."  

The striking male principle is "one of clash, violence, power and rivalry"\(^45\), whereas woman by nature has a "nurturant female principle."\(^47\) Both principles, if functioned singularly to an excess would only produce disastrous results. Here then is the relevance of Antigone as the model of female individuation. "Antigone represents an active source of sustenance to the spirit, rather than just the passive nurturance of the womb. Her commitment to burying her brother’s body embodies the qualities of independent ethics, care taking and autonomy."\(^48\)

Such autonomy and independence of the spirit in spite of the natural feminine tendency to nurture the loved ones can be seen in Desai’s Bim in The Clear Light of the Day or Woolf’s Eleanor in The Years or Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse. These characters have the fierce and defiant inner temper, which “will not yield to any storm.”\(^49\)

Antigone is defiant, but her defiance is an idealistic precursor to ethical commitment, not self-centred rage....Antigone is not an average woman. But she is what the average woman might become a person of autonomy and high
principle; not narcissistically self-involved and not defensively suffering—that is, masochistic—but willing to take risks to live authentically.\(^{50}\)

Virginia Woolf refers to Antigone in her *Three Guineas*, while trying to define true freedom:

Consider Antigone’s distinction between the laws and the law. That is a far more profound statement of the duties of the individual to society than any our sociologists can offer us. Lame as the English rendering is, Antigone’s five words are worth all the sermons of all the archbishops.\(^{51}\)

The five words mentioned by Woolf in the above passage, would read in translation as “This is not my nature to join in hating, but in loving.”

True freedom for woman does not mean a license to do whatever she likes, nor is it a complete hatred of the male. What a true and authentic feminist should crave for is a freedom from the infantile father-fixation. What a woman should seek is not to break the law, but to understand what the law really means.

**Significance of androgyny or the union of male and female principles**

The difficulty arises when the modern feminists take their theory of autonomy to an excess. They consider the male and female principles as binary opposites rather than as complementary factors. Only a proportionate union of these two principles can ultimately produce perfection or wholeness. Family life, which is at the core of both Woolf’s and Desai’s novels, depends on such a unity
of these complementary factors. Where such harmony is lacking, we find the characters being driven to neurotic desperation.

Both Woolf and Desai believe in the power of androgyny in attaining perfect freedom of the spirit. Androgyny, in its essence, means the merging of the characteristics of both the male and female sexes. This corresponds with Jung's theory about the anima vs. animus in the human psyche. According to Jung, a man usually discovers a female personification of his unconscious which represents all the feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche. Jung calls it the 'anima.' Likewise, there is a male personification of the unconscious in every woman. These — anima and animus — serve as invaluable inner companions who endow the man and the woman with qualities needed for the positive and creative way of living.

Virginia Woolf proclaims her belief in the power of androgyny in A Room of One's Own. The idea of the male-female fusion strikes her as she gets a glimpse of a couple getting inside a taxi cab:

For certainly when I saw the couple get into the taxi cab the mind felt as if, after being divided, it had come together again in a natural fusion. The obvious reason would be that it is natural for the sexes to co-operate. One has a profound, if irrational, instinct in favour of the theory that the union of man and woman makes for the greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness. But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me
also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness.\(^{53}\)

She goes on amateurishly attempting to sketch a plan of the soul in each individual where the two powers—male and female—preside and that the normal and comfortable state would be when the two powers live in harmony, cooperating spiritually and she tries to explain what Coleridge meant when he said that a great mind is androgynous.

He meant, perhaps, that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent, and undivided.\(^{54}\)

Anita Desai too has expressed her belief in androgyny. According to her too, “the great mind is androgynous...undivided, and therefore fully, wholly creative and powerful.”\(^{55}\) Harveen Sachdeva Manu comments: “To her (Desai), the literary ideal is one fashioned after the Hindu mythological figure of the Ardhanarishwaraa—the Hermaphrodite—which depicts the union of Shiva and Shakti, of male substance and female energy.”\(^{56}\)

Although this bisexual aspect should naturally lead to a deeper understanding of man and woman mutually, it can also lead to misunderstanding and discord if the archetypal image is projected without regard for the real character of the partner. That is, if a man tries to identify his idealized image of woman with an actual woman,
and does not take into account sufficiently the discrepancies between the ideal and the real, he may suffer bitter disappointment when he realizes that the two are not identical. There has to be a compromise between the demands of the collective unconscious and the actualities of the external world for the person to be reasonably well adjusted.\textsuperscript{57}

That is the negative aspect of androgyny. A disproportionate functioning of the anima or the animus can cause marital disorder. The anima within a man’s psyche or the animus within a woman’s psyche can invariably lead to marital troubles. If they are possessed by this ‘inner man’ or ‘inner woman’, it exerts an irritating effect on each other. According to M.L. Von Franz: “Animus and anima always tend to drag conversation down to a very low level and to produce a disagreeable, irascible, emotional atmosphere”\textsuperscript{58}

Such disagreeable conversation leading to deep marital disorder can be seen in Woolf’s and Desai’s novels. This happens because either one or both the marriage partners take each other for granted and stifle the unique growth of the other individual instead of enhancing and supporting it.

CONCLUSION

The attempted comparative study on the inner desolation suffered by the various characters in the novels of Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai prove that almost all their characters experience a disorientation of self. The existential agony which they suffer could have been averted, if only they had some spiritual
anchorage or religious conviction St. Ignatius of Loyola offers a set of rules to be used during the period when an individual is affected by the movement of desolation. He defines desolation as:

darkness of the Soul, turmoil of the spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love. The soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad and separated, as it were, from its Creator and Lord.¹⁹

The advice that Ignatius gives to one afflicted with desolation is to intensify his activity against desolation by insisting more upon prayers, meditation and examination of oneself. “When one is in desolation, he should strive to persevere in patience. This reacts against the vexations that have overtaken him. Let him consider too, that consolation will soon return...” ²⁰

The Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, famous for his account of the psychological effects of imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps, has similarly insisted on the necessity of belief in a future, when one is desolate. Without rejecting Freudian or Existentialist insights, Frankl speaks about Logotherapy, which focuses rather on the future, that is, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the desolate patient in his future.
NOTES


7 “Black Bile and Other Humours” http://arts.ucsc.edu/_faculty/ bierman/ Elsinore/melancholy/MelBile.html.


12 Storr, The Essential Jung , 213

13 Storr, The Essential Jung, 216

14 Storr, Essential Jung, 225

15 Storr, Essential Jung, 225
16 Storr, *Essential Jung*, 226

17 Storr, *Essential Jung*, 226


23 Jung, *Psychological Types*, 562


25 Bible, Lamentations 1:16

26 Lamentations, 3: 1 - 2

27 Lamentations 3: 5

28 Lamentations, 3:7

29 Lamentations, 3: 11

30 Lamentations 3: 31-32


32 Merton, *Contemplation*, 227

33 Merton, *Contemplation*, 227

40 Adler Gerhard, ed., Selected Letters, 142.
41 Adler Gerhard, ed., Selected Letters, 142.
43 Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway
45 Natalie Shaines, Antigone: Symbol of Autonomy 108
46 Natalie Shaines, Antigone: Symbol of Autonomy 109
47 Natalie Shaines, Antigone: Symbol of Autonomy 109
48 Natalie Shaines, Antigone 109
50 Natalie Shaines, Antigone, 110
52 Jung, Man and His Symbols, 177
53 Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, 93
54 Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 93


56 Harveen Sachdeva Mann, “‘Going in the Opposite Direction’: Feminine Recusancy in Anita Desai’s *Voices in the City*”, *Ariel*, October, 1992 - 22


60 Puhl, *Spiritual Exercises*, 120

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