(A) Realism as a Literary Movement: Realism, as a literary movement with its innovative ideas that inspired and influenced many writers and academics, stands as a landmark also in American literary history. Though it appears to be controversial and has faced much criticism also in the beginning of the nineteenth century, realism has revolutionized the world literature in the past and the impact of which is felt even today. Despite the surrealistic trend in modern art and literature, the realistic mode of expression has been in vogue in contemporary writings all over the world.

Since, romanticism, the conventional mode of the eighteenth century was considered lifeless to have lost touch with ordinary everyday life, early realists notably Zola followed by Diderot and Restif de la Bretonn and Balzac and Stendhal turned to naturalistic mode. The romantics who were expansive, wanted to import new material into literature breaking the conventions of the age of neo-classicism, and indulged in a new kind of abstraction. The latter strand of romanticism where the use of common subjects and language of Wordsworth continued, is considered but an extension of romanticism by certain considerations. In the later period
of romanticism, metaphysical element also crept into art and literature.

Realism as a literary movement can be traced in the ferment of scientific and positivist thinking that characterized the middle of the nineteenth century. It insisted on the immediate perception of reality through ordinary sense, common to ordinary experience, and open to observation, without any preconceived notions about human nature, the universe and the relevance of art to mankind. It was felt that realism, by banishing the ideal, failed to subscribe to the deeply rooted idea that the function of art was to represent the ideal. But efforts were made to get the ideal back into the literature committed to the representation of the here and now as observed by G.H. Lewis.

"Art always aims at the representation of Reality i.e., of truth; and no departure from Truth is permissible, except such inevitably lies in the nature of the medium itself. Realism is thus the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but Falsism".1

The term "realism" first appeared in the article on Balzac in Westminster Review in 1853, even though the phrase 'realist school' had been used but undefined in

Fraser's Magazine two years earlier. The term gained currency though its meaning was still to be defined. Tolstoy, more of a realist than Pushkin and Gogol, his immediate predecessors in the Russian tradition, and Flaubert, more completely a realist than Balzac and Stendhal who had often been claimed for the French School, broke new ground for prose fiction on the basis of observation and objectivity. They had more consciously picturized the life around them than did their predecessors, without distortion. Turgenev’s A Sportman’s Sketches (1852) was the true beginning of Russian realism followed by Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass (1855) which had the explosive force of a manifesto in favor of a new literature and Darwin’s Origin of Species in 1859, which was a gratifying coincidence of intellectual history.

'Russian realism', a powerful and permanent trend, did not have to face much controversy in Russia as realism faced in France. It had to debate and answer many moral and sociological questions of the time. Belinsky in as early as 1835 discerned the philosophical core of realism that inspired several writers of his time and others. He was impressed by the realistic portrayal of Dostoevsky’s first novel Poor Folk published in 1846. Chernishevsky who ignored the idealistic philosophy, tried to study the impact of the metaphysical on aesthetics and even attacked the dilettantish idea that art was superior to reality. He further held that
the function of art was the reproduction of nature and that its subject matter was therefore life, not beauty and the purpose of which was to bring understanding rather than some sort of vague aesthetic shiver. It was the casual remarks in The Diary of a Writer of Dostoevsky and the moralistic dicta in What is Art? of Tolstoy that had set the new literary trend in Russian literature in particular and generate new vistas in world literature. Le Roman russe (1884) of Vicomte de Vogue, a French diplomat, enlightened the writers of the age with a sense of the richness of the 'new' Russian literature.

In Germany in the later half of the eighteenth century developed a tendency what was called "poetic realism" and the writers became too sentimental about it. M.G.Conrad's periodicals "Die Gesellschaft" in Munich and Neue Rundschau in Berlin defended Zola's pronounced ideas on realism and evinced interest in the new literature. Wilhelm Bolsche too supported realism for its deep human concerns and enlightened poetic vision. He found greater relevance of Darwinian theory to modern literature than of mythology to ancient literature. German realism also profoundly influenced the theatre.

In Italy also a native brand of realism called "verismo" developed by Luigi Capuana and Giovanni Verga in the 1880's popularized the new trend. Verga had admitted his
strong affiliation to the realistic movement in his preface to the story "Granigna's Mistress". He called this tale, a 'human document', something he had picked up along the paths in the countryside with nearly the same simple and picturesque words that characterize popular narration. He held that it was "naked and unadulterated fact" undistorted by the lens of the writer.

In the United States of America, the milieu and human conditions were more favourable for the new literary growth. The hardships and adventures of pioneers, physical violations and violence of the civil war, and the cruel and impersonal processes of industrialization of the latter part of the century and 'the melting pot,' forged new experiences that did not fit into conventional formulae but demanded a new reading of life. But Cooper's excellent observation in early American fiction submerged in a romantic framework. Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass insisted on the sensuous texture of everyday life, certainly a primary impulse of realist, which was overshadowed by the increasing idealism of Whitman's thought. In 1862, Rebecca Harding Davis, in her novel Margaret Howth: A Story of To-Day which she intended to be very homely and narrow in its scope and aim, said:

"I want you to go down into this common, every-day drudgery, and consider if there might not be in it also a great warfare". (DMLR, p.17)
This sense of new subjects that demanded a new method of treatment failed together force and direction even in the succeeding decades for want of suitable model. But it was the local colorists that sought to present reality in terms of local scene, who first promoted the tendency towards realism in the country. Though their work was primarily an act of provincial piety and often broke down in sentimentality, they pioneered the way to observe and present the scene and life around them in vernacular and sectional modes of speech.

William Dean Howells, Quondam editor of the Atlantic Monthly, champion of the new writing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, had in his novel A Hazard of New Fortunes, presented the image of America to be broader, less gentle, and more impersonal than what he habitually saw in New England. While his early novels had been trivial depicting merely the social situations, his later works, though inadequate, encouraged others to recognize and make the harsh, teeming, industrialized, urban America, their theme and subjects for further exploration. W.D. Howells had made his literary column in Harper's Magazine, for over ten years, a pulpit to preach the virtues of realism and to discuss the merits of the new European writers drawing upon himself the outrage of conservatives and chauvinists alike. He championed and defended the right of native novelists to write
about the 'things' and life as seen around though contrary to one's own vision. Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) followed by Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Lewis's *Main Street* and Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* by their massive honesty in the depiction of the rapid social changes in America had set the first phase of realism in America.

Realism emerged as a twentieth century phenomenon also in the literary history of the United States of America, when it had gained momentum as popular trend in literature abroad, and was initiated by the subtle ways of presenting reality of Proust, Mann, Joyce, and Kafka. Some American critics like Norris had preferred the term "naturalism" to realism that tended to make their rather sweeping judgments in terms of this world because of certain misconceptions about the non-realistic elements in Zola like symbols and other tricky effects of narration. American realism had escaped some of the mechanical rigor of naturalist determinism. Though its milieu was more expansive than that of the European writers, it was subjected to repressive intellectual and artistic forces.

Italian realist Ignazio Silone's *Fontamara* remained a classic for its less reportorial mode of writing which was followed by Alberto Moravia. Ignazio Silone who believed that the realistic novel should describe anything if necessary without any ideological or moral limitations and
refuted the charge of pessimism saying "For to be a man is automatically not to be happy. That is the human situation". (DMLR, p.20) Camilo Cela, a Spanish novelist declared that his novel *La Colmena* (The Hive) "is nothing but a pale reflection, a humble shadow, of the harsh, intimate, and painful reality of everyday life", and of social evil he was aware that

"it cannot be fought with poultices of conformity and the plasters of rhetoric and poetry". (DMLR, p.20)

'Socialist realism', a Marxist-deviation, has greatly influenced literature outside Russia as well. The Marxist leaders from Engels who fancied themselves as literary critics, sought "the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development". (DMLR, p.22) Socialist realism does not merely represent life as it is but leads people to become conscious of the better future of the communist society. Maxim Gorky branded it as a form of romanticism - "revolutionary romanticism" or "active romanticism" in fictive world.

'Critical realism' as found in Balzac, Flaubert, Turgenev and Tolstoy, has been an effort to depict the workings of bourgeois society and its ugly and repressive aspects, whereas, Christian realism undertakes to depict everyday life in terms of a dogmatically asserted divine far-off event toward which the whole creation moves. To put it in
socio-political terms it is a depiction based on the manifest destiny of a nation or race.

For effective realism, the foremost requirement is the good choice of subject matter, a product of observation, that is ordinary and immediate as suitable for literary treatment as the exotic and remote. In the beginning, the movement was a reaction to romanticism and the material had the advantage of novelty as well. Presenting the common life as lived by the greatest number as most real, realism tries to cover the whole range of human experience. Tolstoy opined that

"it's necessary to write about everything" (DMLR, p.25) which could sometimes be a "grand inquiry about man, about all situations, all flowerings, all degenerations of human nature". (DMLR, p.25)

And the literature became richer in content, more immediate in impact and ranging more widely over human experience than any literature before. Its objectivity is to forcefully present facts of life but avoiding all poetic and rhetorical devices that might concern the main issue.

Realism does not allow us to escape from reality. Its basic strategy is to implicate the reader almost beyond endurance. And the realist is not a psychologist to probe into the psyche of the people around. Dostoevsky himself admitted
"I am merely a realist in the highest sense of the word, that is, I depict all the depths of the human soul", (DMLR, p.31)

which indicates his recoil from external realism. Tolstoy departed in significant degree from externality, but Chekhov is a complete realist in his ability to show both the nagging data of everyday existence and the feeling evoked for those entangled in them. The realist does not rely exclusively or primarily on documents but has access to a memory richly stored with sharply recollected experience out of which he may draw a portrayal of a whole social complex as overwhelmingly detailed in Joyce's Dublin or Farrel's South Side of Chicago. Another important aspect of realism is the philosophical. As Arthur McDowall says, "Realism in art undoubtedly refers us back to a physical, existing reality" (DMLR, p.34) which is exterior and independent of the individual mind and the writers could not escape from making statements about man and the condition of mankind. Chernishevsky suggested that realistic art should seek to reproduce nature in its entirety.

Realism, a literary movement of the nineteenth century especially in prose fiction came to signify a way of representing life in literature typified by the pioneer realists. For presenting an accurate imitation of life, reflecting life as it seems to the common reader, the realist is selective in his material preferring the average, the
commonplace, and the everyday over the rarer aspects of the contemporary scene. Realism gives a special literary treatment to the subject represented or 'rendered' as to give the reader the illusion of actual experience. Daniel Defoe, the first realist novelist dealt with both the extraordinary adventures of Robinson Crusoe, a shipwrecked mariner and with the extraordinary misadventures of Moll Flanders, mirroring real life and sending the events in reportorial manner in the same circumstantial, matter-of-fact and seemingly unselective way. Henry Fielding and Jane Austen were realists for their rendering commonplace people convincingly.

Naturalism sometimes has claimed to present an even more accurate picture of life than represented by realism. It has also, like realism, a special selection of subject matter presented in a special mode of fiction as developed by naturalistic writers liked Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and James Farrell with an objective scientific attitude and with elaborate documentation and frankness. These traits of naturalism can be seen in many modern novels like Hardy's Jude the Obscure, various plays of Eugene O'Neill and The Naked and the Dead, a novel of World War II of Norman Mailer. Richard Blackmore's Lorna Doone, a romantic novel showing the relation of the sexes, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, an ironic novel of manners, William Dean Howell's A Modern Instance, Emile Zola's
naturalistic novel Nona or Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy — reflect the elements typified by naturalism. But there are other literary movements such as "expressionalism" and "symbolism", though blended with the aspects and novelistic modes of expression of the two isms in modern works such as James Joyce's Ulysses, have originally opposed both realism and naturalism.

(b) Realism in Post-War Poetry: J. Hillis Miller has observed that:

"Twentieth century poetry is merely an extension of romanticism. A new kind of poetry has appeared in our day, a poetry which grows out of romanticism, but goes beyond it. Many twentieth century poets begin with an experience of nihilism which is one of the possible consequences of romanticism".2

Existence is divided into two realms, heaven and earth, supernatural and natural, the "real" world and the derived world. It could also be divided into subjective and objective realms. Man as subjective ego opposes himself to everything else. Though some pre-romantic and romantic writers (Macpherson, Blake) speak as visionaries of apocalyptic union of subject and object, earth and heaven, many romantic poets start with both the forms of dualism, and try through

the poetic imagery to reach the supersensible world by blending both subject and object as in the poetry of Wordsworth, Keats and Coleridge.

The nihilistic attitude of man can be avoided by a divergent approach where man turns himself inside-out and steps, as Wallace Stevens puts it, "barefoot into reality" means abandoning the independence of the ego. Instead of making everything an object for the self, the mind must efface itself before reality, or plunge into the density of an exterior world, dispersing itself in a milieu which exceeds it and which it has not made. This new space is the realm of the twentieth century poem in which 'things', the mind and the words, coincide in closest intimacy. In such a poetic space appear "the pans above the stove, the pots on the table, the tulips among them" of Steven's 'Poem of life'. The 'ghosts' who 'return to earth' in Steven's poems are those who have been alienated in the false angelism of subjectivity. They return from the emptiness of 'the wilderness of starts' to step into a tangible reality of things as they are. There, they can "run fingers over leaves/And against the most coiled thorn".

4. Ibid., p.423.
5. Ibid., p.424.
The world of the nineteenth century poetry is characterized by extension and exclusion. The mind is separated from its objects placed in a predominantly visual space where every object is detached from other spaces, with face stretching out infinitely in all directions. It is felt that beyond those infinite distances God has distanced himself from his creation.

Poetry has to do with reality in its most individual aspect. An isolated fact, cut loose from the universe, has no significance for the poet. It derives its significance from the reality to which it belongs. To see things in their true perspective, extensive knowledge of experiences of past is essential. Stevens expects modern artists first to absorb western culture and then force meaning and value upon facts and events by calling forth from the remote and unreal frontiers of the imagination, out of the clear blue sky a new humanistic logos, a hierarchy of plausible faith and truth. The power of the mind to stylize and abstract, Stevens insists, should have control over the real and the artist must be able to abstract himself and also reality, through his imagination. Stevens admits that modern conditions do not allow so angelic a mode for idealism as older thought systems invoked. Modern humanistic poetry cannot present 'too noble a rider' in its imagery and tone and yet it must find a nobility suited to modernity, assumed to blend imagination...
and reality as "equal and inseparable" elements of poetry. Though Stevens never really declares any specific solid truths, he lays down quite a number of the joist principles to support contemporary structure of belief and of value of poetry. Stevens goes beyond the superficial schools of realism and aestheticism by citing Bergson and Joad to show that even the barest reality depends upon mentality, and that the simplest seeing of a fixed object involves complex sinuosity, inter-relatedness, and cerebral modification. Echoing James, Stevens declares that reality is "not that external scene but the life that is lived in it".6

Reality is defined and classified as (a) that which exists independent of man, and remains largely beyond even man's potential perception of it; the object existing irrespective of the subject, (b) that which exists independent of man but is meaningful only if perceived or is potentially perceivable, where the object and subject are engaged in a transactional or dialectical relationship; and (c) as man's internal construct, the subject existing irrespective of object. The topical discussion on the conceptual realism, Rene Welleck attributes chiefly to Georg Lukacs' literary credo which he judged to be "The most coherent theory of realism; it starts with the Marxist dogma that literature is

a 'reflection of reality' and that it will be the truest mirror ... if the author shows an insight into the structure of society and the future direction of its evolution ... realism creates types which are both representative and prophetic".7

Welleck finds didacticism in such a theory where realism whether implied or concealed, implies "a lesson of human pity, of social reformism and criticism". As Lukacs himself puts it, "art, precisely if taken in its most perfect purity, is saturated with social and moral humanistic problems".8

Eliot, Joyce and Lawrence provide illustrations of differing intentions in the presentation of reality. Eliot, committed to a Christian belief when he wrote his plays, presents a centripetal tendency of his characters' discovery of reality. Becket's whole endeavour in Murder in the Cathedral is towards an understanding of his own actions, a purification of motive worked by undeluded self-knowledge; an effort to contradict the Tempters' cynicism.

"All things become less real, man passes
From unreality to unreality".9

Becket realises, in a line repeated in "Four Quartets" that
"Human kind cannot bear very much reality", (TCPP, p.118)
the determination himself faced, and brings others face it.
In the play The Cocktail Party Peter Quilpe speaks of his
encounter with Celia as "My first experience of reality", and
Celia herself declares that she has at last been made by what
has happened of the reality of her situation. The start of
The Family Reunion shows Harry Monchensey reacting against
his family's protective behaviour, and although he fears
reality - "the most real is what I fear" (TCPP, p.249) still
insists on pursuing it beyond their limited perspectives: 
"What you call the normal/Is merely the unreal and the unim-
portant"; (TCPP, p. 268) and his own horrified guilt is "too
real for your words to alter". (TCPP, p.269) But the diffi-
culty of establishing 'a reality' is evident from his later
words to Agatha, "what did not happen is as true as what did
happen". (TCPP, p. 277) However common the endeavour, howev-
er much it seeks the centre, it is after all only the centre
of the self that is being sought.

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In subsequent pages the title of the book is abbreviated
as TCPP.
The subjective indeterminate status of reality is powerfully dramatized in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in which Joyce follows Stephen Dedalus's developing consciousness of different levels of reality - from the simple sensuous reality of a child's sensations to the liberated reality of the disengaged imagination. The novel describes a continuous process of dilation, as Stephen is 'drawn to go forth to encounter reality', and there is further realization taking him to that core of consciousness which forms the basis of the real. Stephen explicitly states that he will 'fly by those nets' personal, religious, and national, which would limit his exploration of reality: "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race".10 Lawrence presents logical conclusion of this distribution of reality in the shifting states of his characters' consciousness, as can be seen in Ursula Brangwen in *The Rainbow* and also in *Women in Love*. Accordingly, reality is not located in the mind, but is at the mercy of the moods and caprices of that mind, dilates and contracts with the degree of activity of the unconsciousness. Reality runs before the mind. "Reality is like a float that rides/all efforts of the irritated mind/to frame its

definition: or a fish, that swallows up all other forms of life and then drinks off the sea in which it swims".11

For Stevens, as for Williams, authentic feeling is the result of a direct perception of, or contact with, 'reality'. 'Sentimentality' and other 'romantic' responses by which man establishes a 'blissful liaison with his environment' are distortions of imagination that in their authentic form do not exist independently of external reality. Thus, for Stevens, as in the whole aesthetic tradition, the initial poetical act is 'observation'. The poem 'Waving Adieu, Adieu, Adieu' reveals that pure observation is the basis of self-fulfilment.

"Just to be there and just to behold. To be one's singular self, to despise . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Ever-jubilant, What is there here but weather, what spirit Have I except it comes from the sun?12

In "Adagia" Stevens says: "The final poem will be the poem of fact in the language of fact. But it will be the poem of fact not realized before".13

11. Ibid., p.8.


In 'Of the Surface of Things', we find Stevens' notion of poetic reality. The poet creates a resemblance in his own image, or perhaps one should say, after his own desire.

"From my balcony, I survey the yellow air, Reading where I have written, 'The spring is like a belle undressing''14

'Six Significant Landscapes' demonstrates the identity of human and natural worlds through imaginative manipulation:

"An old man sits
In the shadow of a pine tree
... ... ... ... ... ...
The pine tree moves in the wind.
Thus water flows
Over weeds". (TCP, p.73)

If, in this stanza, man is absorbed by nature, in the next, nature is absorbed into the human world.

"The night is of the color
of a woman's arm:
Night, female,
Obscure, fragrant and supple,
Conceals herself". (TCP, p.73)

The apprehension of the guise of reality requires that the mind yields up its narcissistic imaginative powers, as can be seen in 'The Snow Man'.

"One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
of the pine-trees crusted with snow;  
. . . . . . . and not to think  
of any misery in the sound of the wind".  
(TCP, p. 9-10)

One achieves the 'mind of winter', being "nothing himself,  
beholds/Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is".  
(TCP, p.10) In 'The Idea of Order at Key West', the poet  
identifies absolute fact with himself through the power of  
imagination:

"And when she sang, the sea  
Whatever self it had, became the self  
That was her song, for she was the maker".  
(TCP, p.129)

The singer has not only mastered reality but she has, in a  
sense, made the personal, universal - she has created a  
supreme fiction that has satisfied her listeners, as well as  
her own, 'rage for order'. And in "An Ordinary Evening in  
New Haven", Stevens describes the poem of pure reality as  
being:

"untouched  
By trope or deviation, straight to the world,  
Straight to the transfixing object, to the object  
At the exactest point at which it is, . . . . .  
A view if New Haven, say, through a certain eye".  
(TCP, p.471)

Visions of reality are always modified by "prolongations of the human".
"Reality as a thing seen by the mind, 
Not that which is but that which is apprehended, 
A mirror, a lake of reflections in a room ......

Everything as unreal as real can be. . . . .

(TCP, p.468)

Conversely, we are told in 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction' that

"Two things of opposite natures seem to depend
On one another, as a man depends
On a woman, day on night, the imagined
On the real". (TCP, p.392)

Consequently, 'The Bouquet' speaks of a world of 'medium nature', "the place of meta-men and para-things", in which reality and human imagination find an ideal coexistence. "Para-things" are things whose existence is partly absolute and partly a matter of poetic insight:

"The rose, the delphinium, the red, the blue,
Are questions of the looks they get. The bouquet,
Regarded by the meta-men, is quirked
And queered by lavishings of their will to see.

The real made more acute by an unreal".

(TCP, p.451)

In one sense, meta men are men whose imaginations, are not divorced from a sense of the 'absolutely real', men for whom 'no blue in the sky' is a hindrance to their becoming 'clear, transparent magistrates'. The para-thing represents what Stevens has called in 'A Collect of Philosophy', an 'integration', the desire of which is part of a "will to order" of both the poet and philosopher. Perception of 'the
infinite of the actual' is an 'inherently poetic' act (or idea).

Poetry transforms reality, but 'the poetic nature of any idea',

"depends on the mind through which it passes. This is as true of the poetic aspect of nature as it is of the poetic aspect of ideas. The sun rises and sets everyday and yet it brings to few men and to those men only infrequently a sense of the universe of space".15

T.E. Hulme says: "All poetry is an affair of the body - that is, to be real, it must affect body".16 Vague effusions, preconceived ideas, abstractions and anything suggesting the 'cosmic', stands between the perceiver and the object perceived; and Hulme's emphasis is on accuracy, precision and definiteness. 'Reality' is poet's perennial ideal and for imagists, 'reality' means the thing-in-itself or the exact equivalent to sensation. Eliot and the Imagist poets are equally concerned about certain qualities like distrust of vagueness, effusiveness, sloppiness, and abstraction in poetry. Eliot's poetry of sensation exhibits split-consciousness as the perceiver becomes unsure of his own


perceptions. Thus inner division conditions his sensibility and permeates the poetic texture which is the source of the rich irony in Eliot's early poetry. Of the different modes of sense-perception, touch provides a direct and immediate grasp of external reality, and tactile sensations predominate "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". The image of October evening, inert, desensitized like a patient on the operation table, conveys tactile sensation and also withdrawal from the world of sense. There is another telling image that conveys both magnificence and void: "I have seen them riding seaward on the waves/Combing the white hair of the waves blown back/When the wind blows the water white and black". 17

Eliot is preoccupied with Bradley's notions of appearance and reality. Appearance is Maya. Like the Vedantists, Eliot denies the reality of time: "The Vedantic approach considers time and other appearances to be inexplicable entities which are not ultimately real .... They are indefinable because they are riddled in contradictions at every level. That moment is immediately followed by another which it determines. In this way, we have universal flux, characterizing the World of Appearances". 18


It becomes irrevocable and irremediable to Harry (of The Family Reunion) and he is bound up with 'the burning wheel', when he pushes his wife over in the mid-Atlantic. He sees people moving aimlessly round and round. They are really in a state of ignorance and 'Maya'. Harry is in the same state, ignorant to reality.

"I have been wounded in a war of phantoms.

The things I thought were real and shadows".19

Like Harry, Edward (The Cocktail Party) and Lord Claverton (The Elder Statesman) are in hell. They are in prisons; they are in the dark. Their past is irrevocable. They are in a state of angst and spiritual bewilderment, perplexment and utter delirium, self-deceit and mental digressions.

Frost's realism treats common men and women without glorifying or idealizing them, the humanity as he has studied it in stony pastures and in academics of art and science. His treatment of humanity is free from even romantic exaggeration, free from any taint of vulgarity or shoddiness.

"There are", Frost once said,"two types of realists - the one who offers a good deal dirt with his potato to show that it is a real one; and the one who is satisfied with the potato brushed clean. I'm inclined to be the second kind ... To me, the thing that art does for life, is to clean it, to strip it to form".20

Frost's stories are "samples". They are not novels in verse. They do not pretend to describe life from the cradle to the grave; they are pieces of life - "a part for the whole". "The Witch of Coos" is one of the strangest of narratives, so incredible and yet so plausible. It is a ghost story, and its homeliness is its surprise. No other tone could be so effective, for it casually mixes prattle with terror. Ezra Pound, on the effective portrayal of Frost's characters, has observed that

"Mr. Frost's people are distinctly real. Their speech is real; he has known them. I don't want much to meet them but I know that they exist, and what is more that they exist as he portrayed them".21

In poems like "Birches", "The Oven-bird", "The Death of the Hired Man" and 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' Frost achieves remarkable realism, a realism born of ordinary


things. The properties he uses are for the most part everyday ones and never exotic. Babette Deutsche observes:

"The poet's senses are awake not to the imagined delights of silken Samarkand and cedared Lebanon but to the seasoned commonplaces of rural experience. He was not like the romantic poets interested in extraordinary and remote things. Almost all his poems deal with familiar native scenes". (AHAL, p.272)

Frost's love of the New England countryside is coupled with his love of the simple rustics. His poems give real characters, live people. The tramps, the farmers, the hired men are all, according to Frost, fit subjects for poetry. His characters are real. There is a great deal of portraits of abnormal people in North of Boston - unbalanced people like the overwrought mother in 'Home Burial', who is cracking up under the burden of grief over her child's death, or the common-law wife in 'The Fear', who unconsciously disguises her desires as obsessions. Most abject of all is the ghastly lunatic in 'A Servant to Servants', who makes life a hideous mockery for himself and his relations. But the majority of characters are sane and sound, like the farmer Warren and his wife Mary of 'The Death of a Hired Man'. About Frost's depiction of these rustic characters George W. Nitchie writes: "Frost is important because he has demonstrated, by his performance in North of Boston and in a substantial scattering of poems since then, how much a poet..."
can accomplish by a sympathetic identification with officially unimportant people, by absorption in a locale, by the ability to hear and retain and reconstruct the sound of speech, and fidelity to a limited concept of experience". (AHAL, p.272)

The people Frost writes about are rural New Englanders, and writes about every possible aspect of their life and doings, their humble occupations, humble joys and sorrows. Babette Deutsche opines:

"Frost has much to say of happy wooings and matings, of friendly encounters and generous neighbourliness, as of the bleaker aspects of farm life".22

Frost because of intimate acquaintance with these New Englanders, writes of them with sympathy and understanding. Greatly influenced by their speeches, he too followed their idiom and phraseology. It is the Yankee speech, the Yankee idiom and phraseology, but purified of all coarseness and vulgarity, that forms the basis of his poetry. Frost has captured their peculiar idiom, and their folklore. Occasionally he has also dramatized his characters that are primarily human. His rural New Englanders reflect the fundamental traits of human nature that is universal. As observed by

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W.L Courthney, Frost as a poet of humanity makes his realism "above all else a devotion to the bare and explicit truth of human life and human character, and the avoidance of all romantic or poetic devices for observing the main issues".23.

(C) Surrealism: Surrealism, also called 'superrealism' was launched as a concerted movement in France by Andre Breton. The "Manifesto du Surrealisme" (1924) states thus:

"Surrealism. Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral control".24

Surrealism is not a new means of expression, nor a simpler one, nor even a metaphysic of poetry. It is a means of total liberation of the mind and of everything resembling it.

"Surrealism is not a poetic form. It is a cry of the mind turning toward itself and determined in desperation to crush its fetters. And, if need be, by material hammers".25

25. Ibid., p.38.
Surrealism as defined by Andre Breton, tends even to revise the definition of reality employing the devices like automatic writing, accounting of dreams, trance narration, poems and paintings created under random influences and art picturing images of paradox and dream, and thus trying to change our perception of the world and the world itself.

The word 'Surrealism' was coined by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire whose autobiographical novelette Le Poete assassine (1916) was popular with the surrealists. Manifeste de Surrealisme (1924) of Andre Breton who led the movement formally announced its beginning. Breton rejected the conventional concepts of art and urged the writers to substitute irrational for rational vision and to search the 'unknown mind' in an effort to express 'the process of thought'. He and his followers had great respect for Sigmund Freud and his extensive probings of the human unconscious, where the surrealists felt, rested the ideal reality - available to man in the innocence of childhood and in dreams. Most of the surrealists recorded their dreams, and many practised 'automatic writing' in an attempt to liberate imagination from the clutches of rationalism. The surrealists wished to create an art free from all "aesthetic or moral preoccupations". They often employed grotesque themes, dreams, hallucinations and subconscious visions in their writing. A recurrent device was the placing of familiar
objects in new or illogical relationships to stress the superficiality of conventional visions of reality. They also tried to rediscover what the critic Arpad Mezei called 'multidimensional' qualities of words.

Surrealism is a revolutionary movement in painting, sculpture, and the other arts, as well as literature, often associated, though for a short period with sane revolutionary political or social movement. It has exerted general influence, both in Europe and America, and greatly influenced the works of Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and the painter Salvador Dali. The influence, direct or indirect, of surrealist innovations can be found in many modern writers of prose and verse who deviated from the conventional modes of artistic syntax, nonlogical and nonchronological order, dream-life and nightmarish sequences, and the juxtaposition of bizarre, shocking, or seemingly unrelated images. In England and America such effects can be found in wide range of writings, from the poetry of Dylan Thomas to the flights of fantasy, hallucinative writing, startling inconsequences, and 'black humor' in the novels of Henry Miller, Thomas Pynchon (V), and, William Burrough's Naked Lunch.

The surrealists are not concerned with the hereafter nor interested in communicating with spirits. They want to demonstrate the inadequacy of conscious reality and the utmost use of the powerful medium of expression. Surrealism
is not simply the striking image, the irrational phrase or the dream-like structure, but is essentially concerned with liberating the imagination and with expanding the definition of reality.

"In an age of growing daily more materialistic, in a society which increasingly surrenders its fate to science and technology and in an environment which daily seems more hostile to those who so carelessly create it, the humanizing commitment of the surrealists becomes ever more attractive".26

Eliot's criterion for art has influenced other explorers of the unconscious, the Surrealists as is evident in their artistic success - making art "provide the emotive shock in man which really makes his life meaningful",27 that is, to induce a "precious terror", a "shudder". Eliot observes that both Ulysses and Tarr are "terrifying". For him the ability to terrify is not only the criterion for judging a new work of art, but it is also the basis for the continuing merit of an older one: Othello and King Lear should still be "frightful". By the same token, Eliot speaks of the "element of surprise so essential to poetry".28

26. Ibid., p. 82.


Eliot's poetics though not specifically surrealistic, it is generically surrealistic. Both Eliot and the surrealists believe that the unconscious is the source of the ultimate reality. Eliot's verse is surrealistic in its local texture, uniting disparate objects and experiences through metaphor. His investigation of the historical dimension of the unconscious supplied him with a comprehensive structure for 'The Waste Land'. Further, Eliot's insistence that some conscious control be exerted over unconscious material in the creative process facilitated such a structure, while the surrealist's emphasis on the unconscious, automatic aspects of creation would not allow for so definite a pattern. His poetic theory supports the metaphoric perception. For Eliot, the basic operation of the mind is metaphoric, creating not merely poetry but language itself. Objects quite "real" in themselves become "non-real", i.e., surreal by virtue of their mutual interrelations, or rather, through their apparent lack of rational interrelations.

Eliot's own verse abounds with surreal images. The "lipless grin" and "staring daffodils" and "Whispers of Immortality" and "Till human voices wake us, and we down "29 of "Prufrock", in Breton's words, "imply the negation of some

elementary physical property". In "Morning at the Window", "the damp souls of housemaids / sprouting despondingly at area gates" gives "to the abstract the mask of the concrete" by speaking of the emotional state of a woman as a flower. Likewise, when Prufrock wonders, "Would it have been worth while / To have bitten off the matter with a smile", (TCPP, p. 6) his preoccupations become as concrete as "cakes and ices". (TCCP, p. 6) And "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" portrays what happens when the poet "dissolved" "the floors of memory". (TCCP, p.14) What is most remarkable about Eliot's surreal images is that they often anticipate similar images in Surrealist paintings. The long hallucinatory passage from 'The Waste Land',

* bats with baby faces in the violet light Whistled, and beat their wings And crawled head downward down a blackened wall And upside down in the air were towers Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells", (TCCP, p.48)

resembles the nightmarish quality of many Surrealist paintings, not only because it contains eerie violet light, sinister creatures like bats, and contradictions of such laws of


nature as gravity, but also because the human shockingly metamorphoses into the animal, as bats with baby faces, or into the inanimate, as cisterns and wells singing. The effect recalls Magritte's Collective Invention (1935), in which the ocean and horizon form the background, and in the foreground on the beach lies a creature, the torso with the head of a fish and belly and legs of a woman.

Sylvia Plath's tragic life and untimely death as revealed in her most personal writings have been quite interesting. Some events as described by Esther Greenwood, the autobiographical narrator of Plath's very popular novel The Bell Jar, are very impulsive and touching. The events, drawn from her own experience, narrated through imagery and attitudes of different characters in Plath's poetry and fiction, are illuminating. Her personal poetry is essentially a contemporary restatement of the apocalyptic vision. Decked with surreal landscapes, mythological characters, scenes of horror of World War II, and glimpses of modern domestic life, invoke her to express and define the poet's present misery and her anticipation of triumphant release. The celebration of death in Plath's poetry envisaging her suicide and the experience of death, is curious and at the same time universal as in the poems of Anne Sexton or John Berryman. As M.L. Rosenthal observed, Plath's work is 'highly charged' as she has used private psychological vulnerability, a cultural
symbol focused in her poems to signify the civilization. The biographical details which Sylvia Plath has made subjects of poetry are rendered meaningfully and are important as they reveal her perceptions of life to the reader not because they are personal but because of their artistic value. Plath's death neither negates nor authenticates her work in the sense that her poems of apocalyptic vision survive her, speaking powerfully and compellingly to the reader. As the focus in her poetry is recreation of self like phoenix, we realize that the woman in the poems is none but Sylvia Plath herself, who is Ariel, God's lioness. Caroline King Barnard aptly observes: "Like Jerusalem, she is besieged, the storm and tempest and devouring fire which distress that city afflict her as well. She is a Jew, victim of grim atrocities. She is a woman, victim of a sexual passion which can realize neither viable release nor proper partner. She is a mother, servant to a solitary and fearful parenthood".32

In 'Lady Lazarus' death is seen as 'the big strip tease'. She tells the 'pea-nut crunching crowd': "Gentlemen, ladies/These are my hands/My knees./I may be skin and bone,/Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman".33


This is the kind of public flogging that the modern audience revels in. Sylvia Plath has further said:

"Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well" (TCPSP, 245)

She admits that she dislikes "the theatrical / Come back in broad day / To the same place, the same face". (TCPSP, p.245-246) She tries to achieve a deliberately mocking tone by countering the violence of her subject matter which is based on her own suicide attempts, with the simple vocabulary of colloquial speech and absurd rhymes. 'The Applicant' also produces a dramatic effect through the use of commercial devices. Here the marriage is seen as a contract and the merits of the bridal suit are advertised with the words:

"How about this suit case -
Black and stiff, but not a bad fit.
Will you marry it?
It is waterproof, shatterproof, proof
Against fire and bombs through the roof"
(TCPSP, p.221)

When she goes on to say, "They'll bury you in it" (TCPSP, p.221) the finality of an inescapable situation is brought home with all its poignancy. Plath finds the impersonal ruthlessness of nature, an essential fact, and relates it to the human world. Her attempt is to define nature in human terms.
Plath rejects the absolute world of romanticism. Her awareness of lurking death becomes by extension, an awareness of insecurity of her own self. The poem 'The Colossus' confesses the poet's feelings. The poet imagines the father as a huge statue that is in ruins. In the landscape of rubble the poet's self is reduced to an ant:

"Sealing like ladders with glue pots and pails of Lysol
I crawl like an ant in mourning
Over the weedy acres of your brow
To mend the immense skull-plates and clear
The bald, white tumuli of your eyes". (TCPSP, p.129)

A poem like 'Ariel', in which the poet describes a ride on her favourite horse by the same name, comes alive through a charged language that dips into the centre of the experience. But in the last poems, the poems withdraw further and further into a wordless stasis. Plath examines the extent of impact of words when she says,

"Axes
After whose stroke the wood rings". (TCPSP, p.270)

The echoes they make travel "off from the center like horses". Axes are tools of violence. Words are axes which make the woods ring with echoes. The poem 'Words' is about the failure inherent in all human situations.
"Words dry and riderless,
The indefatigable hoof - taps". (TCPSP, p.270)

The echoes of the strokes of axes are the words she again encounters. They are the same as riderless horses.