

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Sense of Alienation in W.H Auden's Poetry**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Bhim Bahadur Bista has completed his thesis entitled "Sense of Alienation in W.H Auden's Poetry" under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2007(A.D.) to 2008(A.D.). I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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**Approval Letter**

This thesis entitled “Sense of Alienation in W.H Auden’s Poetry” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Bhim Bahadur Bista, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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## **Abstract**

Auden is widely regarded as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. Though a decidedly modern poet in terms of his radical politics and bold experimentation with accepted literary forms, Auden's idiosyncratic virtuosity and protean ethical perspective distinguishes him from his contemporaries. His poems of the early phase reflect, if not on islands, at least on a landscape of alienation peopled by strangers. This alienation is derived from a Marxist perception of the decay of late capitalist society. All human relationships evoked in the poem are conditioned by the reiterated imagery of invasions, conquests, sentries, spies, and frontiers. He was considered as the hero of the left during the 30s. Continuing the analysis of the evils of the capitalist society, he also warned of the rise of totalitarianism. His poems explore a variety of new and provocative ways of illustrating the futility of modern English middle class existence. As Auden's verse developed in the later 1930s, however, geography took on fresh significance. For his scenery of his early poems, he preferred the industrial midlands; particularly in districts where an industry is decaying. He loved industrial ruins, a disused factory or an abandoned mill, caves and mines where the working class people are forced to be cogs. As they are forced to be cogs they suffer from alienation and indifference.

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## **I. Introduction**

### **W. H. Auden as a Leftist Poet of the 1930s**

W. H. Auden, born in England, achieved early fame in the 1930s as a hero of the left during great depression. His poems and poetic career is in way a voyage into a world of varied stands of beliefs and ideals. If we give a serious concentration on his whole poetic career, we find the surprising unusual meters, words and images, juxtaposition of industrial and natural landscapes, mixture of the rhymes of poetry with those of jazz music. His poetry of earlier phase focuses on the alienated state of human beings and the futility of modern English middle-class existence because of the social evils widespread everywhere, and the industrialization and the rise of inhumane capitalism. There are abundant political and anti-war sentiments in his poem, yet some of his collections of poems contain lighter and more romantic verse. Auden was, as a poet, far more copious and varied than Eliot and far more uneven. He tried to interpret the times, to diagnose the ills of society and deal with intellectual and moral problems of public concern.

The social and political situation had worsened in the 1930s. Auden felt the pressure of events and responded boldly to the challenges of the decade. In the decade evil had its peculiar clarity and it seemed as if the whole structure of the society might break down due to its inadequacies or be destroyed by external threat. He saw the rise of Nazism and endured the troubled period when he served as an ambulance driver in the Spanish Civil War. At the same time Auden and his fellow writers responded to growing mass unemployment, the defeat of the German working class and the rise of fascism, and gravitated with differing degrees of enthusiasm towards the conception of a revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society. Developing on his interest in science and Freudianism, Auden turned to what he imagined were Marxist politics. In response to the crisis, he was searching for a leap in literature, for a poetry that could play a positive role in such a period.

Auden, taking shelter in the different types of philosophies and theories itself, stands as a palpable evidence of his restlessness and his search for something that can be a panacea to heal the breach and wounds festering at the heart of total humanity. Therefore, if a reader journeys into the poetic world of W. H. Auden, he manages come out only with a new vista of experience that is he finds ample evidences of his poetry being filled with a sense of malaise and maladies of so-called modern civilization.

In spite of the fact that Marxism had a strong attraction for Auden, he could not become the member of the communist party. He approached Marxism with an open mind and employed other tools as well. He combined psycho-analysis with Marxism in the diagnosis of the diseased world, a thing radically at variance with the official philosophy of Marxism. Freud and Lawrence with their emphasis on the social change through the death of repression and Puritanism had a considerable influence on Auden. In addition, he introduced into his poetry the ideas of Homer, Lane, Groddeck and Layard whom he had studied. It looks possible that he adopted various ideas and incorporated them successfully in order to handle the larger issues in his own way. He was searching for ways to cure the sickness of the society and individual in the Thirties.

Auden was one of the most significant poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in York, and his father was a physician. At first interested in science, he soon turned to poetry. In 1925, he entered Christ Church College, University of Oxford, where he became the core of a group of young leftist writers who generally articulated a socialist standpoint, while continuing the imaginative artistic revaluation of such former writers and poets as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and Ezra Pound. This group included the poets Louis MacNeice and Stephen Spender and the novelist Christopher Isherwood. After graduating in 1928, he spent five years as a schoolmaster in Scotland and England. Auden's first part of the career includes a small volume of Auden's poems and his most admired and popular volume, *Poems* (1930)

which was later revised with addition of some shimmering, brilliant and finest poems in 1933. In these poems of the thirties, the reader finds and simultaneously locates himself in an identifiable background of crisis. It is one of the high grounds, from which the hawks or the helmeted airmen survey and investigate, in loneliness, a world spread below them: valleys containing pockets of decaying existence and subsistence, industries failed or failing, villages in miscommunication from one another and the huddled and troubled communities between their means of production and of communication-run down, themselves condensed to a unreceptive and hostile separation offer a picture of the failed and lonely individual, attempting to break through his stillness and silence by brief and concentrated though barren, dealings, associations and relationships. Every endeavor towards unity- the groups of people to join together into a society, the individuals to congregate in love, the mind to clutch together in peace- meets a discouragement and is frustrated.

An element of this landscape, nevertheless accumulating abundant frustrative elements, occurs from the way in which personal and public elements mix in it. It contains the mountaneous surroundings Auden visited and loved as a child in Westmorland, the Peak District, and Wales. These are vistas of the world from the rotting industries of the Midlands, there and bays and headlands, country parishes, the college building and the cathedral cloister. He has made the total or whole coheres together with the economic decay of a class, and by imposing upon the whole scene an unexplained state of feud and warfare, of love in opposition to death of spies against the Supreme. Antagonists like the social, moral, economic and political corruptions.

One fundamental and continual component is the use of the language of psychological, analytical, and principally Freudian. A frequent department or gesture or phrase—even the concrete development of the body into the fuzzy, distorted and destructive symptoms—will expose the psychological and spiritual maladies beneath. Again there is a

practical doubleness of attitude inherent in Auden. The disease is regarded at one and the same time the typical and yet as a required expression of subdued energies working their ways to surface.

These poems are also cherished by recognition of the Marxist theory of the predictable decay of capitalist society, at present in its easily recognizable last stage. By this device, Auden gives his poems their characteristic double note. They have the delight of assurance and certainty, of being a part of historical and evolutionary process that cannot and should not be left without any serious attention. But this exhilarated mediation on the unavoidable is made intricate by a quite unlike element: the fascinating and loving affection to what is being devastated, the beautiful, simple, truly strong Englishmen whom history has made outmoded. Auden examines with nostalgia the generation of the handsome triumphant, the bankrupt and ruined boyhood, contaminated youngsters, the beggars, those present a form of life that Auden weighs up with an appreciative and green absorption, while envisioning its collapse.

W.H. Auden's middle phase introduced the most excellent out of his poetic career that introduced *Look Stranger* (1936), *Another Time* (1940), *Letters from Iceland* (1937), *Journal to a War* (1938) etc. Auden's imaginative force is realized in his identification with the tensions of a time and place. But this power went soon astray when he lost these tensions after his settlement in USA. This phase includes feeling substandard of the working class, a logic that things required a new drive from somewhere. Its spiritual basis, seeing out of the corner of the age, the rise of fascism, the prosecution of the Jews, the gathering nervousness and fear of the next war that there an liveliness, an excitement, or an animus in the poetry of the 1930s at its most imposing force during the years when Auden had learnt to organize and create a bondage in it, in the middle of that decade. It is this strength and intensity of present that is absent from the radiant wit and excellent conversation or exchange that has come to

characterize works of the last twenty years.

However, the enthusiastically integrated experience of a lifetime or of a civilization is quite absent from his poetry. His growth as a poet looked largely a rejection of his own past. At any rate, it seemed only a reception of that past which matched his immediate present, gifted or cursed. Auden is noticeably at his best of his capabilities in the verses of his late twenties and early thirties in a way that does not recur in the later phase of his career.

Auden migrated to America in January 1939 and settled there. His migration to America coincided with Auden's taking a more somber and unconcealed interest in Christian theology. Thereafter, Orthodox Christianity becomes the most read out and critically appraised element in his verse. However, this conversion to orthodox Christianity is not taken as an unexpected break; rather it is a continuation, a logical expansion or a gradual evolution of the beliefs and ideals he had revered and approved since earlier times. The earlier held faith in Good state (based on the equality between people and supported by his Marxist belief) now is reflected into his faith in the city of God. This search for a democratic state now becomes a search for the Just City, a place where the just God dwells. The responsibility for choosing earlier the democratic state and now the City of God rests completely on the individual. Every moment is important for every moment is a moment of choice. His migration to America was reflected into his search for new idiom, for new modes of expression. During his first decade in the USA, Auden published *New Year Letter* (1941), *The Sea and the Mirror* (1944), *For the Being Christian Oratorio* (1945), *The Age of Anxiety* (1948) and so on. These poems throw substantial light on his religious views, as well as on his theory of art. They also illustrate that the poet was trying to write a long work in an age of short lyrics. Auden's works of the sixties make it obvious that he has attained stillness and evenness resulting from a negotiation of opposites found conflicting in his earlier poetry. *Nones* (1951), *The Shield of Achilles* (1955) and *Homage to Cilo* (1957) are the only three

successive volumes in Auden's career which if bound together, would demonstrate something like a coherent, consistent poetical character.

The products of this phase echoed Auden's new proficiency in syllable meters, the most apparently unlikely of all forms for the writer of the earlier, vigorously stressed, colloquial verse. Auden has articulated a new vista of reality deliberately set at a distance from the actual, but with a formal coherence and consistency of its own. This is a landscape where the reader finds the poet utilizing the similarities between the modern world and the fringes of a decayed empire, ruled by the labors of clerks, a world whose dual reality is presented in "Memoir for the City."

His later work demonstrates some writing of energy, a drying up the creative stream of his imagination. The parade of Auden's most recent work offers more proof of mechanical deftness than of unrestricted imaginative resources. But their pose and intelligence and humor, their facility of phrase and imitable rhythm delight the reader and arouse appreciation in him. Nevertheless, it remains truth that even in these volumes, a certain kind of imaginative force and liveliness has gone out of the poems. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that they have reflected maturity and poise of mind, and kept hold of all their old technical brilliance. It seems that one of the major sources of his imaginative liveliness up till now has almost run dry.

Auden without any doubt is a social and intellectual poet and social critic. He made an attempt to study the nature of social problems. He was one of the groups of young poets in the 1930's. His friend Stephen Spender makes an observation regarding his activities in the group: "The ordering, intellectualizing and tidying of Auden's own experiences and his acute psychological observation of other people, is developed a stage further towards a classical precision and detachment" (45).

He demonstrates an unusual power in writing poems, prose and drama. He makes

personal use of idioms. Spender comments that Auden is serious within the convention of an idiom but he is essentially not so within his thoughts. He has his links with the later Latin poets. He has an idea of Rome and the fall of the Roman Empire ("Auden Group" 45-48). He put forward the managerial view of society making a gesture of self-assertion. Auden is fighting for the whole position of poetry. He writes, "Our world is dominated by external happenings or by governmental and centralized reasoning" (46). Auden is regarded on the left as a lost leader of the age. He is a champion of his attitude to history of his time, he makes brilliant comments on what is going on in his time- from which he is always slightly outside. About the political themes of his poetry Spender writes:

Much of Auden's poetry is concerned with the individual faced with an unprecedented crisis in the history of civilization and with far-reaching public calamities such as the Great War, the prospect of a greater war, and the crisis in the capitalist system. (42)

According to Justin Replogle, "Auden's early poetry can be very confusing for the most skillful readers and puzzling for the speakers with his allegorical landscapes and private allusions" (111). Complexity and inconsistency are caused by hostility of the poet. Auden's individual poems are coherent but they contradict each other. Replogle says, "Auden's temperament is split into two forces or personae, poet and anti-poet each with its own style, beliefs, inclinations, predispositions and habits (111-12). He does have the allegorical landscape of these early poems. His charts and lists of the characters are unattractive substitutes for exposition. His speaker alternates awkwardly between the poet's earnestness and the antipoet's foolishness, between speech and messages. He is dignified and omniscient and looks on a sick culture. Replogle says, "His language is extremely formal and rigorously, abstract, borders oil

the pedantic (115). About Auden's poetic and antipoetic tendencies Justin Replogle writes:

Auden's failure to unify personae and maintain decorum does not mean that each inconsistent creation is completed bad, or that his consistent works are always good. Many readers will surely prefer inconsistent Antipoetic poems to consistent ones featuring an overly pompous poet. Occasionally we may rejoice when the poetic speeches, growing tiresomely solemn, are shattered by the antipoet leaping on stage to clown around. Better a flaw in decorum than a stuffed shirt poet. (117)

Auden may sometimes lose control, but at least there is any energy that needs controlling. Its pure presence is the most promising sign in the work of a beginning poet. Auden's antagonistic jump from poet to antipoet raise important doubts about his early philosophical themes. He is not only a poet but also a social critic; his poems deal with the works of society. He often cares more about the liveliness of the total verbal performance than criticism. Samuel Hynes says, "Auden's poem extends our knowledge of the crucial moral choice of the thirties, the choice between fascism and its opponent" (172). By examining the choice, he further says that, "He does not make the choice in subjects but he deals with moral decision, not political action"(172)

Auden is an ambitious, argumentative and highly diversified poet. He is supposed to be a Christian poet and his Christianity is recognizable in many of the poems. His personal use of imagery and his irrepressible passion for being witty or ironical at the expense of convention kept his later poetry almost changeable in literary form (1137). He is a great poet and sometimes his wit moves into clowning of a most skilful sort (1136-37). The power of Auden's poems resides partly in its simple distancing from mere rhetoric by means of a Homeric frame that speaks for itself. His

interest in longer structure is, from the view point of the sequence in modern sense, disproportionately discursive and expresses itself, basically, in the long continuous poems.

Daiches considers him to be a witty poet, discursive, active and argumentative before going to the United States but less active after his visit to the United States. He suggests some reasons for this change:

Auden moved to the United States and gradually became less concerned with the social problem of the modern western world and more involved in a personal and religious solution to contemporary ills. There had always been an element of personal questing for a psychological or religious 'healer' in Auden. It now moves in a new direction, producing first characteristically quiet-spoken poems.

(1136-37)

In the *Encyclopedia of American Poetry*, Editor Eric L. Haralson traces two convictions that virtually added to the whole of Auden's achievement in poetry drama, opera libretti and critical prose first that the poet must not lie, and second that although individuals never cease to be responsible for the suffering of other happiness must balance guilt. As per him:

Although widely regarded as one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's dominant poetic figures. Auden has seemed to some frustratingly protean, his formal versatility and willingness to rethink his opinions seeming to deprive his corpus of the coherence usually found in major writers. It has become clear with time, however, that Auden's work is held together by a number of enduring central than poetic truthfulness and human responsibility. (35)

Christopher Isherwood evaluates Auden differently. Firstly, he takes him as a school boy scientist and says, "Auden has covered the groundwork, but doesn't propose to go any further: he has acquired the scientific outlook and technique of approach" (Isherwood 75). Secondly, he takes him as a musician and a ritualist. He enjoys high Anglican upbringing with a sound musical education ("Auden Group" 75-79). The characters of the poem are facing constant danger of choral interruptions by angle-voices (75). Thirdly, he takes Auden as a Scandinavian whose family came from Iceland. Auden loves Isherwood and he accepts his suggestion in the selection of the poems. About his habits of writing, Isherwood says.

When Auden was younger, he was very lazy. He hated polishing and making corrections. If I didn't like a poem, he threw it away and wrote another. If I liked one line, he would keep it and work it into a new poem. In this way, whole poems were constructed which were simply anthologies of my favourite lines, certainly regardless of grammar or sense. This is the simple explanation of much of Auden's celebrated obscurity. (77)

Louis MacNeice in his letter of 21 October 1937, writes that before him his poetry is important ("Auden group" 57). He further says that his poems are strongly spiritual which make people think about them and the thinking out the action follows. MacNeice says, "the poem seems to be a superficiality if we prefer it and the poet is only an extension or, a concentration of the ordinary man" ("Critic and Entertainer" 33-34). The content of poetry comes out of office and the poet seems to be an extension.

Auden is both a critic and entertainer. So, the poet has to do a battle in the selection of materials. Therefore, he is in a position to criticize, where other people are likely to find interesting subjects.

Auden lacks 'personal immediacy' and 'has never been interested either in his

own experience, or the experience of other people for its own sake.' He has been interested in it as an instance of a general case. According to Barbara Hardy, "Auden is fundamentally a religious poet; he finds no evidence in the volume of his longer poems" (102). He feels, sure that religious thinking is not new but he believes in personal experience.

His poetry engages us in every sense of the word, which does have a voice of personal feeling. His concern of poetry is purely conceptual. Auden uses songs and dramatic persona with idiosyncratic idioms and phrases (102-11). He finds himself taking about language and handling rhythms. The pattern of vowels and consonants do not involve own heart as well as the head. His artistic language has the 'serious defect' of lacking suggestive mood. Hardy says, "Auden does have the authentic sounding voice of love and natural, style in his poems" (103-5). Auden's expressions of relationships are much more restrained.

According to Barbara Hardy, "Auden is fundamentally a religious poet; he finds no evidence in the volume of his longer poems" ("The Reticence of W.H. Auden" 102). He feels, sure that religious thinking is not new but he believes in personal experience.

Auden's unusual power of assimilation and the vigor of his personal idiom and its revolutionary effect upon the verse of the time have been noticed by many. C. Day Lewis is not content with those criticisms that label Auden's satire as irresponsible. He says:

His satire has been criticized at times as irresponsible. This is to misunderstand its motive and aim, in so far as it proceeds from the life of one social class, a class which has lost its irresponsibility and civilizing impetus, the terms of this satire are bound to be superficially irresponsible, but no contemporary writing shows so clearly the revulsion of the artist from a

society which can no longer support him his need to identify himself with a class that can provide for his imagination. (55-56)

There are innumerable subjects, themes, and shades of his poetry but the present study, attempts to analyze alienation prevailing in the capitalist society. Money works as the agent of this alienation. Money becomes all in all. People ignore each and every human value for the sake of money. Even the human relationship is modified and reified. This is why people suffer from alienation in the capitalist society the way the characters in *Unknown Citizen*. The Marxist discourses focused on alienation will form the theoretical tools for the analysis of the text.

This proposed research which attempts to study alienation in W. H. Auden's poetry has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter includes introduction to the research paper and to the writer, and analysis of various literatures found on his poetry. The second chapter develops a theoretical tool that defines the vices of the modern industrial revolution and industrialization, and focuses on the contaminated modern civilization, where alienation is the defining feature. The third chapter includes the analysis of the selected poems that sufficiently contain the evidences for and throw light upon the belief that Auden's poems do have elements of alienation due to industrialization and the resulting ever-widening gap between the haves and the have not; and the last chapter is conclusion of what the researcher has found when analyzing the selected poems in the light of the tool developed in the second chapter.

## **II. Theoretical Tools**

### **Alienation in the Capitalist Society**

Critics define Marxism as a theory of determinacy of casual relations and consequences, and Marxists do not avoid or wish to avoid the fatal detour into the one way street of determinism. Richard's practical criticism and the new criticism limit themselves in their search for a text's meaning to the words on the page. Structuralism seeks to establish the structures that underlie narratives and that make meaning possible. Conspicuously absent is a serious interest in what many literary academicians would now consider very issue such as the historical situations and the politics of literary texts. To what extent are literary texts the products of the historical periods in which they were written? The world has gone through enormous socio – economic and political changes in the last millennium. Isn't it reasonable to expect those changes to turn up in our literature? And isn't it at least plausible to assume that those changes have some how affected the way we experience things? Can the human condition remain essentially the same? And what sort of view of the prevailing socio-economic and political condition do we find in a given text? Does it take an openly or more implicitly critical stance?

Marxism is a highly complex subject, and Marxist literary criticism is no less so. Marxism brought a significant change in bourgeois ideology. Marx expresses his dissatisfaction with the trend of the worldview the previous philosophers adopted in their works. As Marx himself clearly states, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (qtd. in Selden- 24). He explains life and world from quite a different perspective. Taking into account the process of change as the inevitable process, his theory brought considerable change in the concept of art and literature as well.

Marxist criticism grounds its theory and practice on their discussion about base and

superstructure, the Marxist philosophy. So, even if Marxism is basically a theory of social, economic, political and revolutionary activities, it does not leave art and literature untreated.

According to Marxist philosophy, base affects superstructure, and the change in base results in the automatic change in superstructure. To be more specific, the change in socio-economic relations brings the change in ideology, politics, religion, art and literature as well. So, basic characteristic of art and literature is determined by socio-economic factors. Before Marx people believed that their ideas, cultural life, legal systems and religions were the creations of human and divine reason, which should be regarded as the unquestioned guides to human life. But, Marxist philosophy reverses this formulation and argues that all ideological systems are the products of real socio-economic structure. Economic and social forces together constitute the base on which erects the superstructure– the politics, law, culture, ideology, religion, values, philosophy and art and literature. Thus, according to Marxists, base is primary and the superstructure is secondary. Marx himself states:

The mode of production in material life determines the social, political, and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determine their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness [...] with the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed [...] this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life. (qtd. in Adams- 626)

The production of ideas, the production of consciousness, is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men. The basic ideas about the Marxist literary criticism is best expressed in the works like *The Communist Manifesto* and *The German Ideology* written collaboratively by Marx and Engels. They believe that each economic structure e.g., feudalism, capitalism or socialism leads to its own type of social

organization and production of its own literature, art, culture and religion. An ideology is no other than the product of the position and interest of a particular class. In any historical era, the dominant ideology embodies and serves to legitimize and perpetuate the interest of the dominant economic and social class of the time. Marx and Engels offer a very sensitive response to all kinds of difficulties, especially socio-economic, facing the humanity on the rise of industrial capitalism. For them, the working class, which emerges remarkably with the advent of capitalism, is the exploited class with both the desire and the ability to overthrow the bourgeoisie, the class of exploiters, and reorganize society in its own social interest. Marx and Engels interpret social and historical events to come up with a revolutionary outcome, while they comment on their own theories as “the reflection of proletarian struggle in the world of ideas” ( qtd. in Cohen- 320).

In this mode of criticism, social class relations function as central instruments of analysis. Hans Bertens, in his text *Literary Theory*, contemplates over Marxism in the following passage:

Marxism as an intellectual perspective still provides a wholesome counter balance to our propensity to see ourselves and the writers that we read as completely divorced from socio-economic circumstances. It also counter balances the related tendency to read the books and poems we read as originating in an autonomous mental realm, as the free products of free and independent minds. (81)

Marxism’s questioning of that freedom is now a good – less sensational than it was in the 1840s and 1850s when Karl Marx began to outline what is now called Marxists philosophy, although it is still controversial enough. He, in the foreword of his seminal text *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*, discusses the relationship between the consciousness and our existence:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. The Victorian upper class, if aware of this line of thought, would have been horrified, and certainly by the conclusion that followed: it is not the consciousness of man that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (81)

The mode of production conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. Marxism is about how the social circumstance determines much, if not all, of all people's life. The way we think and the way we experience the world around us are either wholly or largely conditioned by the way the economy is organized. Under a medieval feudal regime, people would have thought and felt different from the way we think and feel while living in this capitalist economy – that is, an economy in which goods are produced (the mode of production) by large concentrations of capital and then sold on a free, competitive market. The base of a society, the way its economy is organized, broadly speaking, determines its superstructure, everything that we might classify as belonging to the realm of cultures, again in a broad sense, education, law, but also religion, philosophy, political programs, and the arts. As Hans Bertens in *Literary theory* says:

If the way we experience reality and the way we think about it (our religions, political and philosophical views) are determined by the sort of economy we happen to live in, then clearly there is no such thing as an unchanging human conditions. On the contrary, with for instance, the emergence of capitalism some centuries ago we may expect to find a new experience of reality and new views of the world. (81)

If the economic base indeed determines the cultural superstructure then writers will not have all that much freedom in their creative efforts. They will inevitably work within the framework dictated by the economic base and will have much in common with other writers

– living and writing under the same economic dispensation. The classic statement of these crucial relationships is found in one of the theoretical ground – workings of what would become *Das Capital*. Tony Davies, in *Marxists Aesthetics*, writes:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which raises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

(143)

In Marxism, the mode of production conditions the social, political and intellectual life process. In general, with the change of economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations, a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical, i.e., ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. About society, in *Marxist Aesthetics* Tony Davies writes:

The economic structure of society is something to do with economics, rather than with the infinitely complex totality of human beings engaged in youth and age, labour and idleness, misery and happiness, in the social production their life. The definite relations indispensable and independent of their will are relations of class. (143)

Marx's thought is centered on the concept of an ongoing class struggle between those who owned property and those who owned nothing but whose work produced wealth. Karl Marx, in association with Friedrich Engels, invented radical but revolutionary economic, social and political theories in *Das Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx formulated the most revolutionary and scientific theories in the time of tremendous socio-economic changes resulted from the scientific discoveries and establishment of large-scale production industries. His theories, in a very scientific way, disprove the bourgeois economic, social and political system establishing the philosophy of proletariat, the lowest stratum of society.

Marxist philosophy of 'dialectical materialism' emerged in response to Hegelian philosophy of 'didactical idealism', which argues that the matter is determined by consciousness. But, Marxist philosophy believes that the relation between base and superstructure is dialectical with the latter being determined by the former. Marx defines 'ideology' as a superstructure of which the concurrent socio-economic system is the 'base.' Engels describes 'ideology' as 'a false consciousness':

The governing ideology in the capitalistic socio-economic structure incorporates the interest of the dominant class, the bourgeoisie. All kinds of social and cultural institutions and practices including religion, morality, philosophy, politics, the legal systems as well as art and literature are dominated and permeated by the ideology. Bourgeois ideology seems to be offering a natural and inevitable way of explaining and dealing with the world, but in fact, it has a hidden function of legitimizing and maintaining the position, power and economic interests of the ruling class. (qtd. in Cohen – 330).

Marxism treats literature as an expression of socio-economic life and judges it on the basis of how far it has fulfilled this function. Orthodox Marxist critics are of the opinion that the origin, development and success or failure of a literary work should be examined on the basis of its relation to socio-economic life of the contemporary society. Orthodox Marxist literary theory strongly insists that a work of literature should reflect the class relations and be committed to the cause of working class. A writer's success or failure should be judged on the basis of his works which exhibit his insight of the socio-economic situation of the era. Leon Trotsky says: "The poet can find material for his art only in his social environment and transmits the new impulses of life through his own artistic consciousness [...]. Art is always a social servant and historically utilitarian" (qtd. in Adams-794).

Marxist criticism, thus, examines how far a literary work carries the ability in altering human existence and leads it in the path of progress, prosperity and emancipation. It demands the authors to produce reality objectively with special attention to class divisions, the exploitation of the lower class by the upper. Marxism aims at revolutionizing the whole socio-economic life establishing a new political system led by proletariat. Literature, for Marxist critics, should be an auxiliary in spreading ideology of working class. So, literature, instead of rendering outward superficial appearance of reality, should explore the inner causes. Outward superficial depiction of things, like that of naturalism and modernism, bracketing off all the contradictions can never lead to reality. Marxist literary criticism is thus very critical of the movement of 'art for art's sake', which treats a work of art as an autonomous entity. For Marxists, literature should have social as well as political implication. Marxist literary criticism denounces the modernist trend of writing as it concentrates on minute subjective picture of the world. For Marxists, writers should have profound understanding of wretched condition rather than subjective experience and aestheticism. Thus, literature, for Marxists, should revolutionize the conscience of the people of the

working class to topple down the exploitative capitalistic society and to establish the society ruled by the majority class of the working people. They advocate the need of literature as a weapon to lead human society in the path of prosperity and progress.

Literature is unthinkable when attempted to treat it in isolation. So, it should be interpreted in socio-economic context. Marxist critics explain literature of any historical era as 'product' of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era, not as work created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria. In his attempt to prioritize Marxist approach to literature over the formalist approach, Trotsky argues, "They (formalists) believe that in the beginning was the word. But we (Marxists) believe that in the beginning was the deed" (qtd. in Adams-799). Marxist literary criticism, thus, analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produced it. It conceives the idea that the external reality is prior to ideas in the mind and that the material world is reflected in the mind of man and translated into forms of thought.

Marxist literary criticism incorporates not a single approach but approaches, thus accommodating variations within. So, there is no programmatic way of applying Marxist ideas. Yet, Marxist critics will continue to discuss such issues as class struggle, commodification and alienation of labor and so on. Literature might be seen as opposing the ill effects of capitalism, and, of course, art is a part of society.

Capitalistic society lays its heavy blow on humanity and results in the destruction of human sentiments and feelings. It breaks the bond between man and man. The sense of self-interest heightens in the system of capitalism. We no longer enjoy family relation. An individual is important and all kinds of interests and relations are reduced to mere 'cash payment.' Therefore, the relation that exists among the people of capitalistic society is of give-and-take. Under capitalism, everything is bought and sold taking the form of commodity. The relation between people in society appears in the guise of relations between

commodities. Marx views the commodity production as the production of goods not for personal use, but for sale, for exchange on the market. P. Nikitin argues in *Fundamental Literary Theory*:

[...] in order to exploit the worker, the capitalist has to hire him, while the worker has to sell his labor power, while is now a commodity. The capitalist pays the worker a wage, with which the later buys his means of subsistence—commodities. Thus, the production relations between the worker and the capitalist are expressed not directly, but through commodities, and assume the character of commodity relations. (31)

So, personal worth changes into exchange value. All the ecstasies of human relation of ideal enthusiasm and of sentimentalism are turned to bitter egotistical and selfish calculation. All are professional. Physician, lawyer, priest, poet, scientist and all other people of occupation have been made 'wage laborers.' Marx, too, ponders over it in "*The communist Manifesto*" in this way "The bourgeoisie has torn away the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation" (23). Therefore, success of possessing more and more wealth is given privilege. Love relation is considered an obstacle in success of life. The bourgeoisie substitutes naked, shameless, direct and brutal exploitation for the exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instrument of production. The innovative use of modern technological advancement in capitalist mode of production results in the increment of surplus value, which in turn increases the size of capital. Increasing productivity of labor is an important factor, which speeds up the accumulation of capital. In leads to the cheaper commodities, making it possible for the capitalist to cut the value of the commodity labor power, which means that with the same amount of variable capital a greater mass of live labor can be set in motion, so that more

output and, consequently, more surplus value can be produced. But the rate at which workers are drawn into production becomes slower and slower, and lags behind the rate of the accumulation of capital, thus producing an ever-increasing section of workers, which find no employment for their labor. Unemployed population in capitalist society forms an industrial reserve army. The existence of reserve army of the unemployed is a desired thing in industrial capitalism, because the employed ones are compelled to work at low wages. He is also compelled to increase his working hour to sustain his living. P. Nikitin argues in *Fundamental Literary Theory*:

A reserve army of labor in industry is essential to capitalism as a means of systematic pressure on the employed workers, it enable to capitalist to lower the wages under threat of dismissal, and to increase the intensity of labor, i.e. to intensify the exploitation of the working class. (89)

Thus, the greater the accumulation of wealth by the bourgeoisies, the larger becomes the army of unemployed, the higher the degree of exploitation of the employed workers and worse the material position. So, the accumulation of capital and the deterioration of the position of the proletariat are seen to be two inseparable aspects of capitalistic society.

As the magnitude of capital increases and gigantic machines are introduced, colossal amount of things are produced. In other terms, industrial capitalism abides by constant revolutionization of production to meet its motives. To sustain and strengthen the existence of industrial capitalism, there needs a constantly expanding market for its products. As a result, the bourgeoisie expand its realm all over the world. As Marx says in "Communist Manifesto":

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To

the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn form under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old, established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, industries that no longer work with indigenous raw material, but martial, but [...]. (23)

So, the mechanism of industrial capitalism makes the world economy serve the interest of the bourgeoisie, thus compelling the working-class people to live the hellish life under the heightening exploitation. Marx further states, “It (bourgeoisie) has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and concentrated property in a few hands” (24).

Industrial capitalism is always regressive in terms of further development of the productive forces. Socialist relations of production differ radically from those of capitalism and other social formations based on private ownership of the means of production. The basis of socialist production relations is social ownership of the means of production. The matter of importance in the system of production relations is the way the workers are connected with the means of production. Under capitalism, the two are not connected at all, but oppose one another, since the means of production are the private property of the capitalists. Consequently, working people are tirelessly battling to abolish private ownership. P. Nikitin writes in *Fundamental literary Theory*,

The victory of socialism means that private ownership of the means of production has been replaced by social ownership of the means of production [...]. In this process, the exploiting classes are eliminated, exploitation of man is ended. Socialist revolution, whether it is achieved peacefully or non-peacefully, always means the radical breaking up of obsolete capitalist relations and the establishment of new, socialist relations. These

transformations are carried out by the government of the working class in the interests of the whole of the people. (197)

Thus, Marxism explains socialism as an inevitable outcome of the heightening class struggle in industrial capitalism, which lays very destructive effects on whole humanity. Capitalist exploitation is not only economic exploitation but it is also the exploitation of man's right to an integrated life.

How is ideology able to hide authentic reality from us? One very influential answer was given in the 1960s by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. As he says in his essay *Ideology*, “Ideology distorts our view of our true conditions of existence. Ideology works through so called ideological state apparatuses which they may have their own subject to the ruling ideology” (18). It is clear that religion, law, political system, the educational system in short, all the institutions through which we are socialized are influenced by ideology which is embedded in all sorts of material practices. While we believe that we are acting out of free will, we are in reality acted by the system. To clarify his idea, Althusser brings ideas from Jacques Lacan:

Aware of the deep lack – although we can not name it – and yearning for completion we turn to ideology, the more so since it constantly hails and interpolates us as concrete subjects – as if we are complete already. Ideology convinces us that we are whole and real, that we are the concrete subjects we want to be. (60)

Ideology is seen as such a strong presence in the text of nineteenth century that we more or less have to break down its resistance to get a truer picture of the reality the text pretends to present. It is the ideology that is the real target of literary investigation, and aim in this particular case is not to show up the personal shortcomings, but the differences between the ideology and the real world. And the main purpose of Marxist criticism is to show issues

of class and social exploitations and is especially attentive to the cultural mechanism and their literary versions – that keep people unaware of their exploited status.

A central question in Marxist approaches to literature concerns the reliability of literary text as social evidence. It addresses the politics of the world outside the text discussed by Tony Davies in *Marxist Aesthetics*: “If Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* are conditioned by the capitalist society of Victorian England what then are we going to find in these novels, a true picture of Victorian England, or an ideologically distorted reflection?” (90).

Commodity fetishism has become a specific problem of our age, the age of modern capitalism. In preceding forms of society this economic mystification arose principally with respect to money and interest bearing capital. Because of this situation a man’s own activity, his own labour becomes something objective and independent of him, something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to him. This text has drawn attention to the problem of alienation or more exactly to the closely related phenomenon of reification. As Lukacs, in *History and Class Consciousness*, argues, “The objectivism is unavoidable in human life – labour itself is an object, it is only when social forms mutilate the essence of men that there arises the social relation of alienation” (16).

To explain in detail about the alienation in the modernist literature, Lukacs brings Thomas Wolfe in his article “The Ideology of Modernism” in which he claims, “My view of the world is based on firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to me or to a few specially solitary human beings, but the inescapable, central fact of human existence” (278). In modernist literature there is not for him an apparently not for his creator – any pre-existence reality beyond his own self, acting upon him or being acted upon by him. The hero himself is without personal history. He is thrown into the world – meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop through contact with the

world, he neither forms nor is informed by it. The only development in this literature is the gradual revelation of human conditions. Man is now what he has always been and always will be. A gifted writer however extreme his theoretical modernism, will in practice have to compromise with the demands of historicity and of social environment.

Modern subjectivism, taking these imagined possibilities for actual complexity of life, oscillates between melancholy and fascination. When the world declines to realize these possibilities, the melancholy becomes tinged with contempt. The question comes how far were those possibilities even concrete or real? Plainly they existed only in the imagination of the subject, as dreams of their dreams. It is a hopeless undertaking to define the contours of individuality; left alone to come to grips with a man's actual fate, by means of potentiality is clear from the fact that it can not determine development – subjective mental status; however permanent or profound can not here be decisive. Rather, the development of personality is determined by inherited gifts and qualities by the factors, external or internal, which further or inhibit their growth. But in life potentiality, can of course, become reality, situations arise in which a man is confronted with a choice, and the act of choice a man's character may reveal itself – on a light that surprises even himself.

In advance, while still a subjective potentiality in the character's mind, there is no way of distinguishing it from the innumerable abstract potentialities in his mind. The subject, after taking his decision, may be conscious of his own motives. The concrete potentiality can not be isolated from the myriad abstract potentialities. Only actual decision reveals the distinction. The literature of realism, aiming at a truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations of this kind. If the human conditions man as a solitary being, incapable of meaningful relationships – is identified with reality itself, the distinction between abstract and concrete potentiality becomes null and void.

The negation of outward realities is not always demanded with theoretical rigueur. But it is present in almost all modernist literature. The major tendency in modernist literature is the attenuation of actuality. About modernist literature as George Lukacs says in "Ideology of Modernism":

In Kafka, the descriptive detail is of an extraordinary immediacy and authenticity. But Kafka's artistic ingenuity is really directed towards substituting his angst ridden vision of the world of objective reality. The realistic detail is the expression of a ghostly unreality, of a nightmare world, whose function is to evoke angst – a similar attenuation of reality underlies – Joyce's stream of consciousness. (282)

There is lack of human nature. Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experimental fragments; he is as inexplicable to others as to himself. The dissolution of personality, originality, the unconscious products of the identification of concrete and abstracts potentiality is elevated to a deliberate principle in light of consciousness.

A term is threadbare in the religion-socio-political intercourse for ages; alienation is a psyche of estrangement and loss in general. It is a condition in which an individual cannot realize all the potentials of his life, he feels outcast in terms of his relationship to society and his fellow men. This is different from what alienation is in religious and existentialist's terms. In this particular dissertation, the term alienation will be understood as a state of mystification or suffocation resulting from the molestation of an individual's labor power.

Work is the primary characteristic of human beings that defines his entity as distinguished from any other creature. It is his true essence and there he feels conscious of his existence. Production is the characteristic of his active 'species life' through and because of this production; nature appears as his works and his reality.

But when an unseen process forces him constantly to relinquish his production to his master, he will be left contemplating himself in a world that he has created. The process in which he is being gradually impoverished rather subconsciously bewilders him. The basis of alienation under capitalism is the estrangement of the worker from the product of his labor and the mystification of capital exploitation that tries to hide the real relation between wage, labor and capital. Out of this hidden exploitation of living beings and humans are degraded to the level of things. These distorted, mystified (alienated) relations sink deep into human consciousness and are then regarded as something natural and inevitable. Such is the derivation of alienation: it exists in the product itself, and the capacity and desire for humans to produce. When the true nature of worker and production is manipulated, and in this case denied, alienation is the natural response.

Capitalist system exists on objectification of labor and all sorts of human values into buyable and saleable items. In *Das Capital*, Marx dwells long on how alienated products of labor in the form of commodities dominate their own creators in 'Frankenstein fashion.' So, alienation has wider implications than mere mathematical appropriation of value from a worker. It is a resultant situation in humanity as a whole, especially as focused in this dissertation:

The history of mankind had a double aspect: it was a history of increasing control of man over nature, and at the same time it was a history of the increasing alienation of man. Alienation may be described as a condition in which men are dominated by forces of their own creation, which confront them as alien powers. (qtd. in Cohen – 95)

Alienation complex as an ill of modern society, which the reactionaries had ascribed to the increasing rationalization and specialization of the life process, Marx attributed to society and especially in relationship between a worker and owner of production, with regards to the exploitation of the worker by the non-worker, i.e. capitalist. Alienation refers to the fact that man feels towards his productions, whether intellectual, material or artistic. Alienated labor leads to a world in which the real producer cannot recognize himself. Work, man's existential activity estranges him from both man and nature.

As long as he is a member of a capitalist society, man is an alienated being; he is not 'feeling at home' in this world. Because as said above, his product and his labor are estranged from him, the more a worker produces the less he can consume, and the more value he creates the more he devalues himself. All these consequences result from the fact that worker is related to the produces the product of his labor as to an alien object. This phenomenon is as much social as it is psychological. The drive for a larger capital in terms of money values and with complete disregard for the real social requirements in terms of human values, turns all social relationships into economic relationships, that is, human relationships can only be consummated by way of economic relationships. Everything is for sale and all can be bought. The social compulsion to accumulate capital compels individuals to put their trust in money rather than in men. And as only the possession of money allows for social intercourse, social intercourse is for making money.

Every man is a means to another man to secure and improve his own economic position, no matter what his interests may be in extra-economic terms. Although a social being, he is so only outside society. He may find his social

behavior both enjoyable and defensible, but actually he has no control over it and remains a helpless victim of circumstances.

Education as a force for resistance would make people aware of ideological manipulation and educate them for participatory democracy. By The epitome of evil leading to the condition of alienation is the property system. This economic root establishes the basis for the expropriation of the workers, both as a person and as a producer, and leads inevitably to the alienation of man from himself. That distorts the individual of his attributes and values, but they adjust themselves to the alienated life without being aware of this. This irony takes off from what was observed by Marx in “German Ideology”: “This consolidation of what we ourselves produce turns into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up to now” (23).

An individual works for existence but with no inspiration and emulation because he witnesses his labor value being drained by his enemy. He is expropriated of what he earns; that is responsible for general loss of human value.

The term is widely discussed in *Paris Manuscript* (1944) not extensively as a philosophical issue but as a social phenomenon of capitalism. In *Capital: Critic of Political Economy* Marx illustrates the process of reducing an individual into a mere working object, thus creating an alienated condition. As he says in: *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*:

Within the capitalist system all methods of raising the social productiveness of labor are brought about at the cost of the individual labor; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers. The mutilate laborer into a fragment of man, degrade him to

the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil. They estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power. (30)

Man creates goods only by his labor. These goods are exchangeable. Their value is the average amount of social labor spent to produce them. Labor is alienated because the work has ceased to be a part of worker's nature and consequently he doesn't fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, doesn't develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased.

Capitalist structure of society contributed to the growth of alienation to the highest extent, worst in that sense. Here a man's alienation is even more than that of a serf or a slave during feudal age. Slave sold his person, the serf sold part of his labor power, but a worker under capitalist system sells his entire labor power—physical and mental, too. During feudalism, workers and slaves were dependent least not divided.

The proletariat is bashed down into ruin, his mind and body broken on the wheel of woe. Modern times exemplify this; schizophrenia, suicides, school massacres, gangsterism, drug and food addiction, sexual deviance and sexual and physical abuse are all symptoms of a period of super alienation.

Lukacs and his followers stressed literature's reflection, conscious or unconscious, of the social reality surrounding it – not just a reflection of a flood realistic detail but a reflection of the essence of a society. Detriments to social wholeness reveal themselves in the literary work as aspects of capitalism the Marxists critic deals with content, for in content is to be

found literature's importance in the movement of history. Terry Eagleton, like Althusser, in *Literary Theory* argues:

Criticism must break with its ideological pre-history and become a science.

Texts do not reflect historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an effect of the real. The text may appear to be free in its relation to reality, but it is not free in its use of ideology. (42)

Ideology doesn't refer to conscious political doctrines but to all those systems of representation which shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience. The meanings and perceptions produced in the text are a reworking of ideology's own working of reality. This means that text works on reality at two removes.

Eagleton goes on to deepen the theory by examining the complex layering of ideology from its most general pre-textual forms to the ideology of texts itself. He rejects Althusser's view that literature can distance itself from ideology. However, the literary result is not merely a reflection of other ideological discourses but a special production of ideology. For this reason criticism is not concerned with just the laws of literary form or the theory of ideology but rather with the laws of production of ideological discourses as literature.

Eagleton surveys a sequence of novels from George Eliot to D.H. Lawrence in order to demonstrate the interrelations between ideology and literary forms. He argues in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* "Nineteenth century bourgeois ideology blended a sterile utilitarianism with a series of organicist's concepts of society" (43).

About dialectical criticism Jameson says in his essay "Ideology", "Dialectical criticism does not isolate individual literary work for analysis, an individual is always part of a larger structure or part of a larger structure or part of a historical situation" (45).

In reflection model of Marxism literature is seen as reflecting a reality outside it. External reality is prior to ideas in the mind, and that the material world is reflected in the mind of man and translated into forms of thought. The Hungarian thinker Georg Lukacs is the best critic to practice this model. As he says in essay "Reflection Model", "A realistic work must reveal the underlying pattern of contradictions in a society or social order" (45).

His view is Marxist basically in its insistence on the material and historical nature of the structure of the society. He examines for instance Balzac's novel *Les Paysans* and find a significant form in the triangular configuration of three social classes landed aristocracy, bourgeoisie and peasantry. The conflict between these classes was the form of the society and it got reflected in the novel in the form of characters. Like Lukacs. Jameson argues in his essay "Ideology", "The concept of totality is of utmost importance. Without conception of social totality no socialist politics is possible" (189).

The most fully worked-out version of the reflection model in modern Marxists aesthetics is that of the Hungarian thinker Georg Lukacs. Lukacs did not see literature reflecting reality as a mirror reflects the objects placed in front of it. As he says in *History and Class Consciousness*:

Literature is knowledge of reality and knowledge is not a matter of making one to one correspondences between things in the world outside and ideas in the head. Reality is indeed out there before we know it in our heads, but it has shape, dialectical totality where all the parts are in movement and contradiction. (171)

Lukacs focuses upon form which is different from Shklovsky. For him form is the aesthetic shape given to content. About form Lukacs says in "Reflection Model", "It is one which reflects reality in the most objective way" (172). Lukacs considers the form of the early

nineteenth century novel (Scott, Balzac, Tolstoy) or embodying knowledge of the contradiction, content of capitalist society as it develops. Lukacs could either demonstrate the grasp of the totality in a classic realist work or reject the unmediated totality of the non realist work, whether it was naturalist, symbolist or lyrical and subjective. But Marxists critic Theodor W. Adorno had complained of Lukacs's dogmatism and tried to show how Lukacs was trapped within objective reality. Adorno criticizes Lukacs precisely because he transfers to the realm of art categories which refer to the relationship of consciousness to the actual world. Adorno says in *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*, "Art and reality stand at a distance from each other and that this distance gives the work of art a vantage point from which it can criticize actuality" (188).

For Adorno this critical distance comes from the fact that literature has its own formal laws. He doesn't give two important indications of the kind of thing he means. Firstly, he talks of the procedures and techniques and as a fusion of subject and object. Adorno explains how the writers Lukacs castigates for their subjectivism in fact set themselves at a distance from reality, so that their work effectively criticizes it.

Proust and Joyce both use the interior monologue which in Lukacs's view was a technique which placed an inflated emphasis on the thinking subject in the novel. Adorno, however, says in *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*:

The interior monologue, far from cutting the reality, can expose the way reality actually is. The separation from the world and the emphasis on subjectivity which comes from the interior monologue are a true picture of reality in its universal atomistic state, which alienation rules over men turning them into mere shadows of themselves. (177)

Like Lukacs, Adorno takes reality to be not the empirical world we see through our eyes or through the camera lens but the dialectical totality, a structure which can only be perceived by a process of thought linking things together and seeing how they effectively are like Lukacs too. Adorno emphasizes the alienated nature of reality in contemporary western society. The literary work does not give us a neatly –shaped reflection and a knowledge of reality but acts within reality to expose its contradictions. Adorno, in *The Origin of Negative Dialectic*, claims, “Art is the negative knowledge of the actual world” (160).

It is not sufficient to see how Proust and Joyce reproduce an alienated condition, but that one must also see how their work transcends this condition by placing the individual subject within a social totality that takes precedence over him. About Kafka and his works in *The Origin of Negative Dialectic* Adorno argues:

Kafka presents a kind of copy of an alienated or reified totality, as many of his critics have noted. But he also uses formal devices in his text, disruptions of conventional narrative time for instance, which show that this alienated reality has weak points and cracks in it. By both reproducing and exposing the reality, Kafka’s works give a negative knowledge of it, to negate it. (190)

Marxists criticism always insists upon the issue of class relations, and class struggle. Traditional Marxism then asserts that thought is subservient to and follows the material conditions under which it develops. Its outlook is materialist, as opposed to the idealist perspective whose claim that matter is basically subservient to thought is one of the fundamental assumptions of modern western culture. We tend to assume that our thinking is free, unaffected by material circumstances. In our minds we can always be free. But Marxism rejects it. Minds are not free at all, they only think they are. As Hans Bertens, in *Literary Theory* argues: “Capitalism thrives on exploiting its labourers. Simply put, capitalist grow rich and shareholders do well because the labourers that work for them and actually produce

goods get less – and often a good deal less – for their efforts than their labour is actually worth” (83).

Labourers have known this for a long time and have organized themselves in labour unions to get fairer deals. What they do not know however is how capitalism alienates them from themselves by seeing them in terms of production – as production units, as objects rather than human beings. Capitalism turns people into things, it reifies them. Negotiations about better wages, no matter how successful, do not affect that process. Marx saw it clearly at work in his nineteenth century environment. In *Literary Theory*, Hans Bertens reinforces:

Men whose grandfathers had still worked as cobblers, cabinet makers, yeoman farmers, and so on. In other words, as members of self supporting communities who dealt directly with clients and buyers performed mechanical task into factories where they were merely one link in a long chain. (83)

The process of reification is not limited to labourers. The capitalist mode of production generates a view of the world – focused on profit – in which ultimately all of us function as objects and become alienated from ourselves. About capitalism the American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson in his book *Jameson* says: “We now all unknowingly suffer from a waning of affect – the loss of genuine emotion – because of the complete dominance of the capitalist model in our contemporary world” (60).

Marxism, as an intellectual perspective, still provides a wholesome counter balance to our propensity to see ourselves and the writers that we read as completely divorced from socio – economic circumstances. As Marx says in essay "Politics of Class" “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (81).

We always have a certain margin of debates over issue such as freedom of action and thought. We are blind to our own conditions because of the effects what it calls ideology. Ideology is what causes us to misrepresent the world to ourselves. The socio economic base conditions the cultural superstructures. However, there are forces at work that prevents us from seeing this. Marxism rejects the liberal humanist's idea – we are essentially free and can remain free as long as we can think. Ideology is not so much set of beliefs or assumptions that we are aware of, but it is that which makes us experience our life in a certain way and makes us believe that the ways of seeing ourselves and the world is natural. In doing so ideology distorts reality in one way or another and falsely presents as natural and harmonious what is artificial and contradictory – the class differences that we find under capitalism, for instance we are blind to our own conditions.

### III. Textual Analysis

#### Modern Industrialization as an Agent of Alienation

Auden's early poetry, being indirectly committed to Marxism, is in search of values, the values that can be gained only through communism and rejection of the present bourgeois upbringing. Modern life in capitalist society is characterized by a heavy concentration of people in huge urban centers who work for big companies or in production factories in large number. The poet suggests that every industrial worker in capitalist society leads an anonymous life: he works for a big company or a factory, lives in the housing facilities provided by his employer.

Auden's poetry is concerned with the individual faced by an unprecedented crisis in the history of civilization, and with far reaching public calamities such as the Great War, the prospect of a greater war, and the crisis in the capitalist system. His struggle is for the stability and some regenerating pattern of the society.

For our purpose, eleven poems written under the theme of alienation resulting from the modern industrialization and capitalist mode of system have been selected for textual analysis. Majority of the poems are taken from *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957*, first published in 1966. Remaining poems are taken from other anthologies mentioned during the textual analysis.

“The Questioner who Sits So Sly” in *Collected Shorter Poems* (1966), Auden addresses the reader, perhaps a proletariat to enquire into the nature of his predicament in the modern age and to know the chief source of the evil. He refers to the "rich houses", certainly the symbol of bourgeoisie who are responsible for the present day social and political illness. The opening lines of the poem reflect the force of rhetoric and the mastery of the possibilities of a born orator.

Will you turn a deaf ear?

To what they said on the shore

Interrogate their poises

In their rich houses... (31)

These lines aim at gaining an audience and make them to think over the issues of public life. The tone of the opening line is full of irony and satire. It addresses to those members of society who have been its evils and yet not showing any action. The members belonging to the rich part of the society seem to be totally conditioned by the psychological state of mind. The progress of the poem records how bourgeois society is heading towards total collapse with all its decadence and malaise.

Auden's ideas are vividly expressed in the lines:

Remembering there is

No recognized gift for this,

No income, no bounty,

No promised country. (32)

Auden's another world famous poem, taken as satire on the modern craze for statistics questionnaires etc. that put the identity of man at stake while measuring a man is "The Unknown Citizen". In the poem, he describes a man whose monument is erected by the impersonal state to commemorate his death because of his contribution to the state. But the commemoration of the man denies his human identity and simply measures him on the basis of statistics as the epigraph written on the monument clarifies: "To Js/07/M /378/ This marble monument is Erected by the State". The poem is an attack on the concept of a human being who is not much more than the product of all the economic commercial and ideological pressure groups, which force him to conform to a standard pattern of life and thought:

He was found by the bureau of Statistics to be

On against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports on his conduct agree  
That in the modern sense of an old flashboard word, he was a saint  
For in every thing he did he served the greater community  
Except for the wan till the day he retired  
He worked in a factory and never got tired.  
But satisfied his employees fudge Motors Inc.  
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views. (*Collected Shorter Poems 146*)

This poem seems to be attacking the concept of a human being who is not much more than the product of all the economic commercial and ideological pressure groups, which force him to conform to a standard pattern of life and thought. Modern mass organizations such as the factory or the trade union impose uniformity in the individual, and this is strengthened by the press and the educational system. Any personal variations are immediately spotted by social psychology of the worker or other bureaucratic corrective mesmerisms. Commerce is an interested party, for it sells the average citizen his necessary phonograph, radio, car and fridge. Auden protests against a society which confines man by the laws of mass organization, commercial exploitation and a social research and spying system. This kind of criticism of the killings of individual identity, freedom and happiness came, and still come from men of very different view points. This poem after all exposes the fact that how in modern time an individual is reduced to mere in number at the expires of his/her underlying nasality due to rampant commercial and bureaucratic social make up.

The next poem "1929" presents Auden's vision of the public world. The poet examines courageously the human situation and feels pain to see the suffering all around him. He smells the changes in the air and feels optimistic of the future. But suddenly his sense of urgency is increased by the extent of suffering which he comes across:

But thinking so I came at once

Where solitary man sat weeping on a bench  
Hanging his head down, with his mouth distorted  
Helpless and ugly as embryo chicken. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 34)

The life of the man is compared with his surroundings. The poet opposes a passage about ducks who "sit, preen and doze on buttresses" against an evocation of capitalist distress:

All this time was anxiety at night,  
Shooting and barricade in street,  
Walking home late I listened to a friend  
Talking excitedly of final war  
Of proletariat against police  
That one shot girl of nineteen through the knees  
They threw that one down concrete stair  
Till I was angry, said I was pleased. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 36)

One feels the presence of violence in the whole atmosphere of the lines, which is conveyed through concrete images; an added contrast of the violence with older ways of life. "From village square voices in hymn..." gives strength and zest to the private vision.

In part IV of the poem, Auden catches the decay in social relationship as it is mirrored in personal relationship. He calls for revolution to change the society.

It is the time for the destruction of error.  
The chairs are being brought in from the garden.  
The summer talk stopped on that savage coast.  
Before the storms, after the guests and birds.  
...  
The falling leaves know it, the children,  
At play on the fuming alkali tip

by the flooded football ground know it-

This is the dragon's day, the devourer's.

Orders are given to the enemy for a time. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 38)

This passage is an excellent example of poetic intensity and emotional energy, fine turns of speech, arrangement of attitude and tones; all aim at enriching the central theme, that is, the alienation of modern man. The images of "storms", of the "Loud mad man" of "falling leaves" and "the flooded football ground" reflect the social and political tragedy.

A scene of exploitation and the resulting alienation in a modern society can be found in the poem "The Witness". The pitiful lives of the young men is described thus in the beginning of the poem.

Young men late in the night

Toss on their beds,

Their pillows do not comfort

Their uneasy heads,

The lot that decides their fate

Each cast to-morrow,

One must depart and face

Danger and sorrow.

Auden further writes:

And look, behind you without a sound

The woods have come up and are standing round

Deadly crescent.

The bolt is sliding in its groove,

Outside the window is the black remover's van. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 65)

These scenes implying perils are usually compounded of a rugged countryside and ruined mines and factories, reflecting Auden's early acquaintance with Derbyshire and Yorkshire, and with the distresses of industrialism in the English Midland countries. It is noticeable that since he has come to America this scenic element has faded from his poetry.

"Consider" is the most famous and one of the most important poems of Auden dealing with social themes. Auden takes a magisterial and a panoptic view of the existing situation:

"As the hawk sees it or the helmeted Airman."

Consider this and in our time,

As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman;

The clouds rift suddenly-look there

At cigarette-end smouldering on a border

At the first garden party of the year. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 49)

The very tone of the poem is cool and invites attention of the readers by asking to examine the bourgeois civilization. The most remarkable aspect of the poem is its perspective that reveals to our eyes. By taking help of the use of "hawk's vision" and "airman's vision" and then fusing them together, Auden has tried to present the complex political situation of the 1930s. Just why Auden should use hawk's vision and airman's vision seems to lie in the fact that both see things clearly as they exist without any illusion. Both suggest sharp insight and heroism.

Auden records the artificiality and hollowness of the privileged class. Those who love to attend "the first garden party" and "the sport hotel" and wear fur are infected by the germs of the decadent society. Thus, the images such as: "Dangerous, easy, in furs", "stormy fens" do hint at the sinister aspect of the situation. The threat of violence and the dangers of war

and communicated in evocative images. "They could rift suddenly look there/at create-end smoldering on a border."

The poem moves ahead with the vision of decadence. There is a specific reference to the capitalist society in the second section. Auden attacks them because they show no concern for the society and simply indulge in triviality:

You talk to your admirers everyday  
By silted harbors, derelict works,  
In strangled orchards, and a silent comb

Where dogs have worried or a bird was shot. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 49)

But the death of the bourgeois is inevitable because they are heading towards destruction. The "supreme Antagonist", i.e. death will not spare them who is more powerful than great "northern whale". This is explained in Marxist terms.

The final section attacks financiers, dons, clergymen. One cannot fail to mark the excitement and emotion that enter the poem:

Financier, leaving your little room  
Where the money is made but not spent,  
You'll need your typist and your boy no more;  
The game is up for your and for others,  
... Seekers after happiness, all who follow  
The convolutions of your simple wish,  
...

They gave the rises to the ruined boys. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 50)

The most remarkable thing about the poem is its eloquence, zest and the awakening of emotion in men. In addition, it spotlights the enemy. We can also find the angry note of protest of a young man against the "financier", the "seeker after happiness" who are

responsible for social distress. The poet believes that their game is up and their destruction is inevitable. He also attacks the public school system where boys are ruined and develop complexes. This is mostly due to the giving away of the prizes to the ruined boys. In this poem Auden has presented, analyzed and examined the true state of affairs of the distressing Thirties.

In "A Summer Night, 1933", the personal relationship stands as representative of a community, for the sheltered, expensive, cultivated, pleasurable, furtive, insecure, loving privileges of a certain powers of love. The tone is modulate to give the necessary movement to a large subject. It includes the tenderly light and allusive echoes, and the death wish:

Though we would gladly give  
The Oxford colleges, Big Ben,  
And all the birds in Wicken Fen  
It has no wish to live  
And the private loving knowingness of  
And when the birds and rising sun  
Waken me, I shall speak with one  
Who has not gone away. (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 69)

Auden's most remarkable volume of poems in England was *Look, Stranger* (1936), which shows Auden's advance in exploring the ways in which imagination and reality are mixed. One finds that the regressive nonsense of the early poetry yields for the most part to a serious use of the ideas of Marx and Freud. Auden is quite conscious of impending war during the middle thirties. Majority of poems present a picture of both political and personal ills as a result of failure in love. Even love is presented against the background of unemployment, starvation and threat of war. The manner of symptomatic analysis and call to action are both traceable which are in a clearer Marxian frame of reference.

Auden has projected the encounter between man and external reality to a great extent. His sharp insight into the current affairs is presented now through the private vision and concrete images and now with critical detachment; he makes an attempt to conquer external disorder:

Poem I: Auden wishes that love should give back to men the simplicity of heart and it should inspire them to noble thoughts:

O love, the interest in thoughtless Heaven

Make simpler daily the beating of man's heart, within. (11)

Seen in this way love becomes a base of patriotism for the poet which makes the individual aware of his surroundings and prompts him to do something "And make us as Newton was, who in his garden watching/The apple falling towards England, became aware..." This kind of patriotism as envisaged by Auden is urgently needed because the situation seems to be highly disturbing which has caused decay and depression in England. The capitalism has also created some marvels but they are 'intelligible dangerous marvels'. The poet hopes that a new society would emerge with the decline of the capitalist class:

Some possible dream, long coiled in the ammonite's

Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and reflection

Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain. (12)

The poem entitled "September 1, 1939" begins by branding the thirties as a low dishonest decade. Auden's explanation of why Germany has adopted Hitler as its 'psychopathic god' is a blend of Freudian, Marxist and Christian ideas. Auden is not explicit enough and tends to throw curt references at it with inefficient explication. He mentions 'Luther' presumably as the symbol of the subjection of church to state power. He alludes to what occurred at 'Linz' without telling us that this is where Hitler wants an Austrian invasion.

These short hand notes are not really expanded enough to enable us to agree with his conclusion that.

Those to whom evil done

Do evil in return. (*Selected Poems*, 22)

This might refer to the German nation's reaction to Luther's, or to Hitler's reaction.

On to his schooling, or possibly to the current below on the thirties, that a haze was a product of a revengeful Versailles Treaty after the First World War. Whatever the value of Auden's ideas, he wrote that he is still indebted to Freudian psychology for his analysis, to Hitler's school induced psychopathetic, and to social historians for his conception of 'statism' which has driven a culture mad.

As in his earlier poems, the maladies of individuals and of state capitalism are seen as inter-connected. Auden's views remain Marxist enough to discover similar maladies in the American capitalist system, and his vocabulary still includes the terms 'imperialism' and 'competitive' though it is significant that his lines on 'collective man' voice fear rather than left wing confidence (for Auden, an American sky-scraper symbolizes collective man rather than collective capitalists) the New York bar, with its incessant music and electric lights symbolize man's retreat from his metaphysical state which is likened to being "Lost in a haunted wood/ Children afraid of the night/ Who have never been happy or good" (*Selected Poems*, 23). The very first stanza, with its unmentionable odor of death," figures prominently in any discussion of the poem's connection with the vast tragedy that lay in Europe, America, and Asia.

I sit in one of the dives

On fifty-second street

Uncertain and afraid

As the clever hope expire

Of a low dishonest decade  
Waves of anger and fear  
Circulate over the bright  
And darkened lands of the earth,  
Obsessing our private lives;  
The unmentionable order of death  
Offends the September Night. (*Selected Poems*, 24)

Of course, the portrayal of an immovable cataclysm must be necessarily vague and even in the first stanza this vagueness gives rise to the kinds of generalizations that would legitimately anger many of Auden's critics. In this stanza alone, however, several of the themes that had already occupied Auden, and would continue to do so until he died, are clearly present: Psychology and neurosis, the conflict between the individual and the state, and the individual's moral responsibility in times of national economic crisis. These are the themes that engage Auden in this poem.

Similarly, in "Grub First, Then Ethics" from *About the House* Auden asserts prophetically to build the just society. In the modern capitalist society he finds that ethics and morality have no value. Grub precedes morality. The need of the hour is to accept personal responsibility to build a just human society.

Though built in lower Austria,  
Do it yourself America  
prophetically blueprinted this  
palace kitchen for kingdoms  
where royalty would be incognito. (23)

Auden argues that the modern kitchen is a kind of place where one can live peacefully. The line 'do-it yourself America' is prophetic and makes it explicit that it is necessary to act to

build or construct a new society. A small kitchen symbolizes the ideal place. He glorifies kitchen because the kitchen is metaphor for political reality and at the same time it is a possibility of creation in this technological age.

In the concluding stanza, the poet voices freely and directly his feelings about 'the houses of our city' which are constructed in an unplanned manner:

The houses of our city  
are real enough but they lie  
haphazardly scattered over the earth. (25)

With the power of its grisly detail and the charitable profundity of insight. Auden is intent on conveying, as one leading theme, the responsibility the individuals should accept to make a perfect human society. Because our city is not like that Greece and Rome and in 'her vagabond forum' (26), it is extremely difficult to spot the citizen. As such, the need to rebuild, remodel and beautifying seems to be very urgent. There is possibility also that the foes of the city might make an attempt to destroy it but the poet, however, believes that humanity never allow it and put all possible resistance to drive them.

A vivid juxtaposition of the living conditions of the rich and the poor is made in the poem entitled "The Capital". Auden thus describes the luxurious lifestyle of the affluent:

Quarter of pleasures where the rich are always waiting,  
Waiting expensively for miracles to happen,  
Dim-lighted restaurant where lovers eat each other,  
Café where exiles have established a malicious village.

On the other hand, the poor are shown deprived even of their basic needs:

In unlighted streets you hide away the appalling;  
Factories where lives are made for a temporary use  
Like collars or chairs, rooms where the lonely are battered

Slowly like pebbles into fortuitous shapes. (*Collected Short Poems*, 122)

The last two lines highlight the loneliness in loud and clear terms.

A similar disapproval to the industrialization and the alienation and indifference it has led to is very well expressed in his short poem “*Musee des Beaux Arts*”. In this poem, Auden shows how people are busy with their petty business and are indifferent to not only to the pains and sufferings of others but also their own higher goals. Inspired by Brueghel’s painting, the poem shows how the “dogs” go on with their “doggy lives” even while an event of cosmic importance might be taking place just around the corner.

Especially significant is the concluding part, where this indifference becomes even more distinct:

In Brueghel’s Icarus, for instance,  
How everything turns away quite leisurely from the disaster,  
The ploughman may have heard the splash, the forsaken cry;  
But for him it was not an important failure,  
The sun shone as it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water: and the expensive delicate ship must have seen something  
Amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get and sailed calmly on.

The indifference of the ploughman towards the suffering of Icarus is important in our case. But even more important is the indifference of the “expensive delicate ship” which finds the sight of a boy falling from the sky amazing, but has neither time nor interest in trying to rescue him. Auden’s words, the ship had “somewhere to get” and its act of “calmly” sailing on show the height of indifference towards those who are suffering in the modern industrial society.

In this way, this brief analysis of some of the selected poems show that Auden's poetry is clearly influenced and guided by the socialist mode of thinking. His early poems begin by being preoccupied with neurosis in individuals, but this gradually extends to an interest in the epoch and capitalist society. His especial concern is in the inequality in a capitalist society, and the resulting alienation of the individual.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This brief study of Auden's selected poems leads us to arrive at the following conclusion. In his early poems, Auden portrays the working class people, who are exploited in industries and mines. They lose their social values as they are forced to be cogs in the big money making machine industries. They suffer from alienation and indifference because of their commodification in the capitalist society.

Similarly in his poetry of 30s Auden gives an expression of image of the deed with all its storms and strains. Auden's poetry dealing with struggle of the modern men in the vast industrial realm is closely related to his impersonality, which he achieves by merging his identity in the world around him. The poet becomes an inseparable part of the things described, analyzed, satirized, examined and contemplated. What is most important in the fact that he has very successfully resolved the conflict between the private and the public speaking in a manner which is represented of the time. We are led from experience to ideas, from feeling to deep thinking or to a thoughtful assessment of the experiences gained from his close undertaking of man's life his problems and his place in the society. What adds grandeur and striking quality to Auden as a leftist poet is his amazing capacity to fall into the moods of the period and present its problems and difficulties in the most reliable and artistic way.

His poems are full of symbolic images and situations suggesting such nations as the desperate isolation of the middle class individual in the capitalist society. He tries to express the effect of financial and social ambition on people and wants to show how all the secret relationship illustrates something about the conflict between love and money.

His poems of the 30s have tried to prove that money creates system in which people will buy their possession of another person's life, in recompense for the love they cannot have, because the result of not having love is alienation. After reading the poetry of W.H.

Auden, one can find that his poetry is filled with a sense of exploitation of the working class people in the bourgeois upbringing of the capitalist society, and it time and again swings between the sense and need of creating equality and focuses on communism which is marked by the complete breakdown of the agrarian way of life and economy.

His poems present the social context and historical background with sensitivity to textual details that are accurate and faithful record. The poems of the English period present the disturbing questions and challenges, the problem of the bourgeois society, the growing sense of evil, the dehumanization of the individual, evils of economic slumps.

Auden suggests that human beings have not advanced in matters of culture and civilization along with gains made in material well being. Today most modern men and women enjoy a better material standard of life but their intellectual and cultural growing has not taken place of the some proportion. Actually individual creativity and independence of mind have fallen steeply and modern man has become a cog in the state machine.

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