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Moral Ambiguity and Authorial Intrusion in Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*

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Letter of Recommendation

Rina Shahi has completed her thesis entitled
“Moral Ambiguity and Authorial Intrusion in Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep*”
under my supervision. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for *viva voce*.

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Letter of Recommendation

This thesis entitled “Moral Ambiguity and Authorial Intrusion in Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Rina Shahi, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The research paper makes connection between the authorial moral intent and its projection through characters in the novel, *The Big Sleep*. It studies the characterization and the author's intension in the creation of characters, from the perspective of morality. Immanuel Kant and George Simmel's views on moral authority have been used; in particular, Kant's assertion of "universalized moral act" and Simmel's idea of "overwhelming social forces as one of the deepest problem of modern life." The study demonstrates how the fear of alienation guides the human cognitive faculty. Alienation leading to immoral act in the novel is something identical to the author's personal life. Hence, the research argues that *The Big Sleep* is Chandler's defense against *moral transgression*, specially the offence to his sexual behavior.

Moral Ambiguity and Authorial Intrusion in Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*

The dramatic life story of Raymond Chandler and his identical representation of characters in his first novel *The Big Sleep* motivated me to ponder about his strategy of extending sympathy towards the minor characters in the novel consequently guiding me to analyze the moral lapse exhibited by the author. The research paper attempts to make a comprehensive study on Chandler's life and his representative characters in the novel. After reading the biography of Raymond Chandler, we get the idea that the author's life experiences seem to be reflected in the text. Therefore the paper investigates the life of characters in connection to the life of author. The novel suggests that alienation in the modern world is the major social factor that results the unstoppable activities of the people. The research paper highlights upon the agony of the people in 20th century brought by their aloofness. The fear of aloofness motivated the characters in the novel to carry on immoral activities. Feeling of being aloof is one of the symptoms of depression. Depression is considered to be one of the stages of mental illness. Judge Jessica Brewbaker notified to PennLive with the title "What happens when a mentally ill person commits a crime? The Judicial Notice" that, "If a person is found to be legally insane at the time of the offense, to the extent that he or she did not know what he or she was doing, or did not know that it was wrong, the person will be found not guilty by reason of insanity, and could be subject to commitment and treatment under the mental health provisions described above"(2). It means though mental patients are found to be the culprit, their crime is not counted as severe as in general cases. That is, in case of mental patients, immoral act deserves forgiveness and can be left unpunished. With the projection of these ideas of the author, immorality is being defended by the author.

Hence, to unfold his moral stand this research paper borrows the ethical theory of German philosopher, Immanuel Kant.

The major idea of Kant is that the activities like murder, stealing and lying are immoral. No matter how much happiness is brought by such activities if it does not carry the goal of entire human beings, then that cannot be rational (1, Kantian Theory). Despite the action possess the quality to make the actor the immense happiness, if the action does not seem rational and cannot be followed by all the people in the universe then the action is not acceptable. According to Kant, the moral actions should be such that the action one performs should harm no one when acted universally or it should carry the human goals.

Along with the principles of Immanuel Kant, the paper also derives some ideas of George Simmel. According to George Simmel, there are different factors in the society which forces the people to act in different way. In other words, the environment or the surrounding around affects the cognitive action and the physical actions. Sometimes those factors are overwhelming. "The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of external culture, and of the technique of life"(136).It means our actions are determined by different factors around. Together, he argues while individuals are reacting with the society they experience the great sense of alienation.

In context of the text, most often heroic characters or the lead characters are provided with the good traits and high sense of morality and loyalty. And among the tussle of vice and virtue, vice is always punished. Authors basically take the side of virtue and advocate for the actions guided by the principle of morality. But the

visibility of the author's side in *The Big Sleep* is unpredictable in a quick glance. So, this research work aims to unfold the true side of the author who deliberately tends to cover the deeds of vices in the novel. Unlike other authors, Chandler in his novel, *The Big Sleep* does not go with only the voice of morality. Together, he also defends the immorality which is more or less advocacy to immorality. Generally, lead characters are chosen as the spokesperson by the authors. The voices of authors are invoked by the lead characters. Authors reflect their life through their characters. Authors seem to gather the sympathy of readers through the protagonist in the text. But the plot of *The Big Sleep* is different. It does not only focus on making the readers sympathetic towards the lead character, instead it succeeds to gather the sympathy and empathy towards the assumed minor characters too.

The paper explores the relations between fictional characters and the author as part of despair created by the sense of alienation in the modern world. It diverts from the conventional notion that flawless moral characters are only the deserving candidate for sympathy to minor flawed characters for every reaction to the world is the influence of the environment around. The scholars and the readers of Chandler would be befitted by this intensive study as it would direct the readers to explore the alternative ways of viewing people and their supposedly immoral acts in relation to their impactful surroundings around.

The Big Sleep is Chandler's defense against the accusation of sexual immorality. To be clear on this statement, we should have knowledge on how Chandler lived in his real world. Based on the biography presented by J Kingstn Pierce in the page of "The Thrilling Detective Web Site" under the title "Authors and Creators", and Tom Hiney one of the best biographers, Raymond Thornton Chandler was one of the prominent authors of the 20th century. He was born in Chicago on July

23, 1888. Although his father was drunkard and mother was divorcee, he was lucky enough to get good academic opportunities. He studied international law in France and collected many work experiences. He fell in love with Pearl Eugenie “Cissy” Pascal and married in 1924. She was 18 years older than Chandler and already twice married and divorced. At one point, Chandler could achieve different position like vice president. But deteriorating health of Cissy, as per her age and workload during the time of depression made him follow his father’s line of drinking habit. He started to drink and engage in affairs with office secretaries. He worked in the oil syndicate then. In 1932 he was fired from the job of oil syndicate for drinking habit and the affairs with the office secretaries. It was the turning point to his life which made him return to writing. *The Big Sleep* was his literary product followed by many other literary works. Cissy’s death on 1954 was a great shock to Chandler. His mourning heightened to depression resulting the suicidal attempt. He left the world in 1959. According to David Leafe’s work published in Mail Online on 21st July 2012 under the title “ Greatest thriller of them all: How Raymond Chandler was driven to madness by his love for an opium smoking nudist”, Chandler had the wrong idea about sex and relation that it would ultimately lead to violence and abuse. This sense might have developed in Chandler experiencing the unstable married life of his parents where his mother was regularly abused by his father until she left him. He remained unmarried till his 30s. “ At school he found any discussion of sex awkward and years later he would write that he regarded it as a delicate and almost scared thing”(7). This line implies that he did not take sexuality as normal men did. Sexuality for him was the matter of purity. But he ended falling in love with Cissy Pascal, a woman of his mother’s age who was also his best friend’s mother. There may not be a moral design for deciding the age of the spouse but how ethical will it be to choose

the partner who is almost the age of mother? This can be the matter to ponder. Further David Leafe mentions in his writing,

By the time, Cissy was 54 and the fact that her body and sex drive were changing with the menopause perhaps made her seem less threatening and more pure to the virginal Chandler ... Although it seemed a happy marriage at first, Chandler was soon drinking heavily- and he could afford to do so, with a new job as an executive at an oil company. His increasing alcohol problem put pressure on the relationship, as did a growing feeling that, in playing the part of devoted follower to his wife, he was missing out on life. Now sexually experienced to a degree, he was increasingly aware of attractions of younger women. (8-10)

The lines above provide the knowledge about how Chandler was not happy with his sexual life and slowly and gradually being attracted towards the younger women. To support this idea we can further visit the article published in "The New York Sun" with the heading "The Man Who Gave Us Marlowe". It states:

Chandler's personal and professional life were both helped and complicated by the women to whom he was attracted, notably Helga Greene, his literary agent; Jean Fracasse, his secretary; Sonia Orwell (George Orwell's Widow); and Natasha Spender (Stephen Spender's Wife), the last two of whom assumed Chandler to be a repressed homosexual.(8)

These lines published wide in the newspaper clarifies that he was really attracted to other women in his work place besides his wife. The article even exposes the name of the women to whom he was attracted to. It not only explains about the attraction

towards the women, together, the women judging him as the homosexual hints us how close they might have been in the sexual life as well. Otherwise one cannot assume other as homosexual just observing outer trait and lifestyle. They really might have been quite closer with him in his sexual world which for general world is the issue of moral derail. Similarly, in The New York Times under the title “Clues to Raymond Chandler’s Life and Career in Sale of His Books and Papers” by Dave Itzkoff published in 23 Nov, 2011, author states “On Dec 13 Sotheby’s will sell at an auction in New York a collection of Chandler’s books and other works from the library of Jean Vounder Davis, who was the author’s fiancée and secretary until his death in 1959...”(n.p). These lines further justifies that Chandler was in relation with other women too beside Cissy. The phrase “fiancée and secretary” might not have been used in vain. Thereby Wikipedia has inserted the extract from “New York Review of Books” from the article “The Knight of Sunset Boulevard” by Pico Iyer where he writes “Having begun in 1922 as a bookkeeper and auditor, Chandler was by 1931 a highly paid vice president of the Dabney Oil Syndicate, but his alcoholism, absenteeism, promiscuity with female employees, and threatened suicides contributed to his dismissal a year later” (4). In the excerpt, the word promiscuity is used. The meaning of the word according to the Thesarus refers “characterized by or involving indiscriminate mingling or association, especially having sexual relations with a number of partners on a casual basis”. The acceptance of the review in New York means the acceptance to the arguments and the ideas shared or the vocabulary used. In reference, we can tell that he was accused of promiscuity publicly. This is the strong evidence to his downfall in the realm of sexual morality.

Relating his life story with his literary work, let’s start from his first novel, *The Big Sleep* which came to the public soon after a year he was dismissed from his

job. The plot of the novel *The Big Sleep* by Chandler is a tale of two sisters Vivian Sternwood and Carmen Sternwood with the crucial role of Philip Marlowe, an investigator. Philip Marlowe is a private detective hired by General Sternwood. Sternwood, the father of Vivian and Carmen is physically weak but materialistically powerful. He assigns Marlowe to solve the blackmailing case of Carmen, targeting Arthur Gwyn as the suspect. Along, he intends to detect, if it had anything to do with the disappearance of Rusty Regan his son in law or the third husband of Vivian Sternwood. After knowing that Sternwood is fond of Regan, Marlowe gets idea about the secondary intention of Sternwood to hire him.

As soon as Marlowe comes in contact with Sternwood family, he is eyed by both of his daughters. Time and often, he is attempted to be seduced by Carmen and Vivian. Marlowe tries his best to remain loyal to his employer. Initially, Vivian misunderstands Marlowe as being hired to find Regan. As the investigation proceeds, Marlowe finds that both the daughters of Sternwood are being toyed by Eddie Mars, the gambler. Eddie Mars is supported by his wife Mona Mars on one hand and Canino his gunman on other hand. The series of murder takes place under the plot designed by Eddie Mars in co-ordination with Canino. Marlowe's investigation ends with his encounter to the schizophrenic action of Carmen. She attempts to kill Marlowe as she remains unsuccessful to quench her sexual lust from Marlowe. Marlowe is confirmed that the disappearance of Regan was the result of Carmen's craziness. While trying to find the blackmailer, he ends up finding the murderer. Yet he chooses to be silent and insists Vivian to take her to mental cure centre. Finally, he leaves alone with the memory of Silver Wig. Silver Wig is the woman who moved Marlowe's heart but can never be his woman.

Now, there comes the question how can the real life be connected with a hard-boiled detective fiction? Literary creation has always been more or less the reflection of real life experience of author, his ideas or imagination. It has been the platform for authors to echo their inner voice. The ideas of authors are projected by their literary product. That's why we call; the work of literature is too near to the author's life. Raymond Chandler and his work *The Big Sleep* is not beyond this line. Raymond Chandler forwards his ideas based on morality on one side and he defends immorality on other side at the same time. This paper would analyze the ambiguous position of author through the character's characterization in the novel.

Chandler characterizes his characters with distinct moral gap. The superficial view of this moral gap makes the readers appreciate the morality and neglect the immorality. But along with the development of the story, readers develop sympathy towards immoral characters. For instance, Marlowe the attraction of the novel is characterized as the hardworking detective with high moral values. The bold and independent attitude of Marlowe attracts the readers. His moral discipline in his profession develops the respect towards him. He is tried to be seduced by both Vivian and Carmen from the beginning to almost the end of the novel. But he remains unmoved by their seduction. For Marlowe both the Sternwood sisters were no more than his client's assets, for the protection of which he is in duty. His moral stand gains the height when he pushes away naked Carmen out of his room. Carmen manages to enter Marlowe's bedroom using his card and keeps lying naked on his bed. But Marlowe does not enjoy her seductive act. He instead threatens her to throw out of the room naked followed by her dress. Carmen leaves the room with rage. As soon as she leaves, Marlowe reacts like "I went to the bed and looked down at it. The imprint of her head was still in the pillow of her small corrupt body still on the sheet. I put my

empty glass down and tore the bed to pieces savagely” (90). This response of Marlowe exhibits his determined moral stand. Naked body of Carmen could not lure him. It was no more than a “corrupt body” to Marlowe. His act of tearing the bed reflects his anxiety upon the immoral behavior of Carmen. It was not bearable to Marlowe. Carmen’s craziness hurt the ethical value of Marlowe. Yet he could do nothing as she was his employer’s daughter.

After Marlowe explores about the death of Regan, Vivian offers him fifteen thousand dollars to keep the truth away from his father but he refuses the money. He forwards his view, “I do all this for twenty five bucks a day and may be... to protect what little pride a broken and sick old man has left in his blood in the thought that his blood is not poison”(89). It indicates that he is not only concerned about his pride but also his employers. He seems even more ethical when he utters the lines as he told to Mars like, “One customer at a time is a good rule” (109). It projects his determination and honesty which could not be derailed by anyone or anything; neither sexual luring nor materialistic luring. He stands as the person with high dignity in the eyes of the readers. This level of ethics leaves no space for moral doubt or inquiry against Marlowe.

At a point when Sternwood gets an idea that Marlowe is in inquiry about Regan, he gets furious.

I did not ask you to look for my son in law, Mr. Marlowe.

You wanted me to, though.

I didn’t ask you to. You assume a great deal. I usually ask for what I want.

I didn’t say anything.

“You have been paid, he went on coldly.” The money is of no consequence one way or the other. I merely feel that you have, no doubt unintentionally, betrayed a trust. (20)

General’s words questioned the sincerity of Marlowe. As a result, his response was abrupt and decisive. “It may mean nothing to you. It might mean something to me. What does it mean to Marlowe? It means that I have refused payment for an unsatisfactory job. That’s all” (21). Marlowe gets ready to return the fee as his self-esteem is hurt. But he is not satisfied and explains further with an analogy to defend himself. He replies the General that hurting him wasn’t like hurting a window washer. He must have the freedom to approach the case as he sees fit, to do what he thinks is right.

When you hire a boy in my line of work it is not like hiring a window washer and showing him eight windows and saying “Wash those and you’re through.” You do not know I have to go through or over or under to do your job for you, I do it my way, I do my best to protect you and I may break a few rules, but I break them in your favor. The client comes first, unless he is crooked, even then all I do is hand the job back to him and keep my mouth shut. (24)

These lines imbed the idea of moral purity. But it is contradictory with the lines like, “I may break a few rules”... His argument hints that breaking the rules are not wrong all the time. He is nowhere wrong in his eyes. He defends his apparent immoral acts by alluding to rule imposed by others.

According to Immanuel Kant’s theory on ethics, one should stick to rules and duties. He states in his book *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* that, “Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a

universal law” (30). In other words it’s the rules and duties which are accepted universally. In reference, the fulfillment of duties can only be the parameter to judge the morality. When the rules are broken or the acts of telling lie or murder or something alike take place, he or she falls into the category of breaking the rules or performing the act beyond the duties which would be considered immoral. And those acts cannot be acted universally. Unlike Kant’s theory of moral act, Marlowe, as the mouthpiece of the author says: “I may break a few rules....” His argument hints that breaking the rules are not wrong all the time. He is nowhere wrong in his eyes. He defends mentioning that he breaks down the rules for employer’s sake. He seems to be fulfilling his duty but at the same time the employer himself is not happy with what his employee is doing. He thinks that Marlowe is crossing the line. Marlowe opines at the moment that his deeds were the part of his duty. But the question is can everybody break the rules as Marlowe mentioned? According to Kantian theory, “the rightness or wrongness of actions does not depend on their consequences but on whether they fulfill their duty” (1). In this response, Marlowe is still in a right tract of morality. Simultaneously, if we consider that Marlowe is thinking the rule just for the sake of one person then he sounds immoral again as breaking the rules for someone’s happiness cannot be universalized. The author puts the readers in the dilemmatic situation regarding what kind of action is being performed by Marlowe the detective.

Chandler has characterized Marlowe as strongly moral meanwhile he too made him do some immoral acts presenting the excuses together. This is Chandler’s strategy to cover the immoral acts that existed in minority by the majority of his moral tasks. Doing this, he aims to generalize or transform the unacceptable act to acceptable. More importantly author characterization of Marlowe with the high dedication and sincerity towards employer develops the praise of readers towards. To

clarify the argument above we need to tally character and author or Marlowe and Chandler. Similar to the fictive character Marlowe, the real character Chandler had been maintaining his morality. Chandler respected women. His acceptance of 18 years older love is not the act dared by general people. He remained with her till her death in 1954. His mother strictly opposed their marriage. He did not go against her will till she was alive. He got married to “Cissy” after his mother’s death. Chandler was a scholar. He attended preparatory school in London. He studied international law in France and Germany. Besides literary field, he involved in numerous jobs. Among all, it seems appropriate to mention that he was enlisted as a private in the Canadian army and was sent to French front lines during World War first. With those educational background and the job position one can blindly believe on him. One needs high spirit of morality and discipline to be in the field of army. It means one can generalize that his real life character is identical to the highly moral character in *The Big Sleep*. J Kingstn Pierce, in his article published under the title “Authors and Creators,” mentions that Marlowe embodied the author’s conception. Together, he gives him the title of “unusual man.” “Marlowe embodied the author’s conception ... a common man and yet an unusual man” (60-62).

The sentence “Marlowe embodies author’s conception,” means the way Marlowe thinks and the way Chandler thinks is similar. In the sense, Marlowe represents author or Raymond Chandler. In another words, Raymond Chandler is equally moral and loyal as Marlowe.

On contrary, rest of the characters is characterized as immoral characters. Before the readers analyze the characters, Sternwood himself explains that both of his daughters are immoral. He gives the details of his daughters while introducing his daughters to Marlowe. He explains to Marlowe;

Vivian is spoiled, exacting, smart and quite ruthless. Carmen is a child who likes to pull wings off flies. Neither of them has any more moral sense than a cat. Neither have I, No Sternwood ever had ... Vivian went to good schools of the snob type and to college. Carmen went to half a dozen schools of greater and greater liberality and ended up where she started. I presume they both had and still have all the usual vices. If it sounds a little sinister as a parent, Mr. Marlowe, it is because my hold on life is too slight to include any Victorian hypocrisy ... I need not add that a man who indulges in parenthood for the first time at the age of fifty four deserves all he gets. (7)

None of the parents ever disclose the characterless behavior of their daughters to the third person so easily especially when there are some flaws. In addition when it's all about immoral behavior, it seldom happens. But Sternwood does so easily and openly and expresses that his daughters are immoral. He compares the daughters with cat. Also he enrolls own self as immoral, telling "Neither have I." He does not only include the three of them but the whole Sternwood clan mentioning, "No Sternwood ever had...." It assures us that the two daughters have been immoral. The careless parenting of Sternwood which too is immoral as being a father makes Sternwood feel guilty. He indulges in parenthood for the first time at the age of fifty four means he is not a responsible father. When the children really required the parental guidance he was not there. And his late presence as physically paralyzed body gives no sense. He could not give proper moral guidance to his kids. As mentioned by Sternwood, Carmen acts immorally from beginning to the end of the plot. Carmen is unmarried younger daughter of Sternwood with seductive attitude. When Marlowe enters

Sternwood's home, he first meets Carmen. Her approach towards him was unusual to general girls.

“You are awfully tall,” she said. Then she giggled with secret merriment. Then she turned her body slowly and lithely, without lifting her feet. Her hands dropped limp at her sides. She tilted herself towards me on her toes. She fell straight back into my arms. I had to catch her or let her head on the tessellated floor. I caught her under her arms and she sent rubber on me instantly. I had to hold her close to hold her up. When her head was against my chest she screwed it around and giggled at me. You're cute, she giggled. “I'm cute too..”(3)

She giggles and she sucks her thumbs which are some sex appealing reactions of Carmen. Her words and reactions were seductive. She frequently repeats the word cute and giggles along with the act of sucking her thumb. Her seductive acts were beyond a limit. She does not hesitate to lie naked in Marlowe's bed. She wants her body to be exploited. She enjoys the exploitation on her body. When she is made naked for the pornographic photographs, she produces the loud noise but the noise was not solely the noise of pain and despair. The noise included the pleasure as well. After hearing the scream of Carmen, Marlowe states that, “There was no fear in the scream. It had a sound of half- pleasurable shock, an accent of drunkenness, an overtone of pure idiocy. It was a nasty sound” (18). In that sense, she found the very exploitation to be the matter of pleasure. Even the use of the word ‘cute’ repeatedly for Marlowe is her attraction and seduction towards Marlowe. She wants Marlowe to be her prey as she tried with her own brother in law, Rusty Regan. Targeting father's employee on one hand and brother in law on other hand lowers her down in morality.

Carmen is continuously trying to lure the people for her lust. Had she been able to lure her brother in law or Marlowe, she would have been happier. What she has been doing is for the sake of her self interest and happiness. But as per Kant, "If a person's emotions or desires cause them to do something, then that action cannot give them moral worth" (4). In that sense, Carmen's action did not possess any morality. He opines that the action that makes one happy should be guided by duty. The action or any tasks that brings happiness has no meaning if the actions are immoral. In case of Carmen's seductive action, she is time and again reminded and opposed by her behaviors which seem to be immoral. Moreover, seducing own's brother in law is beyond the immorality. Her actions were neither permissible nor required by duty.

After ascending Carmen to the height of immorality, Chandler cunningly supports her bringing an excuse of mental disorder. As soon as Marlowe discovered Carmen as the mental patient, the perception of readers is changed. She is no more viewed as immoral girl rather she is empathetic to the readers and all her immoral behaviors are forgiven for she has been the victim of schizophrenia. Her actions had been guided by the ill and sick psyche of Carmen. This is where author becomes successful in his projection of immorality. He defends immorality connecting it with the excuses held by the characters. The position of author is not clear here as well. Bringing the issue of mental trauma in the character he seems to be dragging the excuse to neutralize the immoral acts of Carmen. In other senses he is defending the immorality.

Similarly, Vivian the older daughter is not less than Carmen. She is alone despite three marriages. She is unable to be stable in her marital status. She also bears the desire to get closer with Marlowe. After returning from Mars' casino, she is tried to be robbed by Mars' man. She is rescued or protected by Marlowe. She develops an

attachment with Marlowe. She pleads Marlowe to kiss her and hold tight. “ Hold me close, you beast”(23). This informal language by Vivian expresses that she wants to be closer to Marlowe. She lowers down Marlowe to the position of beast. On the top of all she keeps the secret despite her knowledge on how special was Regan to Sternwood. In addition he hides the murderer. Hiding a criminal is another crime. It's not moral either.

For Kant lying is always wrong. Hiding the truth is another form of lying. In other words, lying about the murderer despite the knowledge about who murdered is a support to the murderer. Supporting a murderer is also kind of taking part in murder which cannot be moral at all. According to Kant, “murder is not categorized as immoral only in the case that was the method or way to defend owns self” (6). Thereby Vivian is immoral as characterized by Chandler. But, audience would not go with Kantian theory at the moment because Vivian too has her own excuses. For audience, she keeps the secret away from his father for the sake of family and family prestige. She aims to save her father and her sister. Therefore readers would be sympathetic to Vivian regardless of her immoral actions. Definitely the steps taken by Vivian cannot be universalized. One cannot hide culprit for the individual's interest or profit. But when it comes to most of the audience' s perspective, they would surely take the side of Vivian as self interest and family interest is what people prioritize in their day to day life. At the moment, immorality is not a big deal before the family members and prestige. Through this characterization too Chandler defends immorality. Chandler smartly characterizes Vivian with dualistic nature. Her instability in conjugal life, the habit of frequent visit to the casino and frequent approach towards Marlowe tags her with a large question mark in morality. At the same time, when one thinks of her sacrifice and hidden protective behavior towards

the family members and family prestige, it reminds the readers of her daughterly duty. She is respected even more when the truth is revealed that she has been holding the secret of Carmen just for the sake of her family. She in fact is the victim herself as she is the one who has lost her husband though she was not in deep love with him. Rusty Regan for Sternwood was the best companion to kill his boring time but he was the life partner of Vivian. It seemed like she has been holding the pain throughout the time to protect her sick sister and weak father. The literary art of characterizing Vivian too seems confusing among the readers. Her devotion towards family members is the shield which Chandler developed to prevent her from being announced as an immoral woman.

Another character to be discussed in the line of immorality is Eddied Mars, the gambler. He owns Cypress Club a gambling house where Vivian visits frequently. He is wealthy enough to hire the people like Canino for his dirty works. He is closer to Sternwood family through his intimacy with Vivian. Till the second half of the novel, he is presented as the fellow supporter of Vivian. He lends her money. He helps to keep her secret away from her father. But at the end of the plot it becomes clear that the whole story is conspired by him. He is not helping to keep the secret rather it is his way to earn surplus by blackmailing Sternwood family. Moreover, he had hidden his own wife Mona Mars to make the people think like Rusty Regan has betrayed Vivian and moved with Grant Mona who had once been the girlfriend of Regan whereas Regan was dead long ago. Besides them, Arthur Guywn was no doubt an immoral character as he abducted and blackmailed people for her pornographic purpose.

Now in overall study of this characterization of Chandler, Mars is highly immoral or the opponent character of Marlowe. He is involved in numerous criminal tasks; hiring of guns man, owning the gambling business and promoting the

pornography. All those activities did not support the human common goals for the human happiness. He did all for his own advantages. His acts were not rational and cannot be thought of being followed by all the people in the universe without any harm. In reference, he is immoral according to Kantian theory of ethics. But the twist is he is adorable to his wife Mona Grant, the silver wig of Marlowe. Mona is the woman who impressed Marlowe and remained inerascable in his heart. She was ready to be alienated from her own husband and get bald for her love and loyalty towards his husband Mars. She gets angry with Marlowe when he tells her that Mars is not doing anything right. She did not want to believe Marlowe's words and leaves the room in rage. She believed her husband but not any one. This positivity of Mona forces the readers to think like there might be something really very good about Mars. He is the same person who keeps on supporting Vivian in unannounced way. He helped to manage the corpse of Rusty Regan after Carmen killed him. The readers would definitely be confused with these kinds of activities of Mars. One would not think like he did it for money because he already owned Casino at the centre of the city. He owned many buildings. He left his building for renting others. He even could possess many guns men and other workers who supported in his task. Viewing upon these all one can conclude that he might not have helped Vivian for blackmailing her at length or to get money from Sternwood because he already had enough. After getting idea on all these reader would only get confused on what kind of personality is supposed to be presented by Marlowe through Mars. Despite the audience's idea on immoral acts of Mars some of these things put the readers though in the lingering state.

It exhibits that the novel is dominated by immoral characters with a large gap. A moral character is surrounded by numerous immoral characters. The projection of

moral gap among characters is Chandler's strategy to cover author's voice. This kind of presentation easily distracts the attention of audience or readers. People initially get attracted to someone or something with the outer appearance. But the decision to remain attached or ending up is done after the close up view or the deeper analysis. In the novel Chandler has developed the characters such that Marlowe allures everyone with his standard level of loyalty towards his profession and principles. So, readers collect all their sympathy towards Marlowe. It means he becomes the protagonist to the readers. Readers assume that Marlowe is the model character where author conveys the message to the readers to follow his moral discipline. Marlowe thereby is considered as the spokesperson to Chandler. The line by Pierce, "Marlowe embodies the author's conception." (60) projects the same thing. The line supports the idea that author or Raymond Chandler's voice is represented by Marlowe the character designed by Chandler. In other words one has to be moral and static in the dignity and pride.

At the same point, the paper comes with different idea. It is true that Marlowe represents Chandler but he does not advocate the author's conception. For Marlowe, going beyond the principles is being immoral. The voice of Marlowe is one should be strict and rigid to maintain morality or one should take the stand. But this paper explores that the voice of Marlowe doesn't match the voice of author, Chandler. The voice of author is "There is nothing like immorality." It's the product of those factors which stimulates us (our reactions). "Marlowe" the presented moral character is just an illusion and temporary where as the rest of the immoral characters are realistic.

We have been hearing all the time that the morality of people is dwindling each day. It means, it did not just take place in Chandler's novel. It had started since long. When we become specific to United States, Carl Drews argues about great

moral peak during 1950s in “History and Background of the Morality Index.” He opines that from that high point there has been a steady and continuous decline in morality. He also presents morality graph and states that, “In the late 1990s I would hear political and religious commentators decrying the great decline in American morality.” His words and research works simply imply that declination of morality is not deniable. And this seems to be the social common problem with a great question to the human cognitive values and behaviors. So, the immoral characters presented by Chandler are realistic and practical. But the morality attempted to be projected through Marlowe itself is questionable. The base to mention the above line is, Marlowe tries his best to stick in his moral principles but towards the end of the novel he is bound to cross the line of morality. When Vivian seduces him to kiss, he forgets his morality. He forgets that she too was the daughter of his employer. He kisses her deep holding her tight. “I strained her against me until the shivering of her body was almost shaking mine. I kept on kissing her. After a long time she pulled her head away enough to say: “Where do you live?” (86)”. The first two sentences reflect the passionate emotional flow of Marlowe. His shivering of body implies that he enjoyed the contact. So the question is while doing so did not he remember his morality at the moment? It definitely was immoral but he tries to defend himself by telling that kidding was good but he was not hired to sleep with them. By telling so he meant to show that his action intended to make Vivian reveal the truth. This is just the tactic to be in the safe side. Though it is taken seriously, at this part, Marlowe is performing his duty on one hand whereas he is abusing Vivian on the other hand. He goes beyond his principle of not being physically close with the client’s kids. But to make Vivian reveal the truth, he emotionally uses her. Kantian principle contradicts here. Unless the action cannot be universalized that cannot be noted moral. It indicates that

Marlowe's emotional attack to Vivian to get the truth was not moral. But when the action is based on duty it is acceptable according to Kant. In that reference, Marlowe is right. He uses Vivian during the process of performing his duty. The authors stand at this time seems slanted towards immorality again. He characterizes Marlowe as the one who takes help of immoral act to maintain his loyalty to the owner to fulfill the duty.

Likewise, he himself kills Mars and blames upon someone else and does not handover Carmen to the police even knowing after the secrets. He finds out that Carmen was responsible in the death of Regan. But let it be secret by telling no one. Is leaving the criminal unpunished, moral to an investigator? But he sets her free. This shows how Marlowe gets weaker in his moral stand at length.

Telling truth is what Kant lists under his perfect duties. But Marlowe fails to tell the truth to the General. He does not tell truth about Carmen's deed. So, moral duty is not followed by Marlowe according to Kant. Kant argues that if one had to lie, it should be following the rule, "It is permissible to lie." Together, the critic James Rachels makes some changes in the idea of Kant and forwards his notion like, "It is permissible to lie when doing so will save a life." Accordingly, the secrecy maintained by both Vivian and Marlowe saves the life of General to whom Marlowe addresses like the one fighting with the later stage of his life.

According to John Paul's investigation of Marlowe in his work "Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. The Hard Boiled Detective Transformation," he forwards some of his ideas about Marlowe.

Marlowe incorporates the tension of an era in which self centered rugged individualistic ideology of the United States could no longer solve pressing social problems.... In stark contrast to earlier hard

boiled heroes of the wildly individualistic 1920s Marlowe symbolized the 50s urge for what Donald E Westlake called a need for people to believe in a community rather than isolated individuality.”(9)

The extract urges us to believe in commonality rather than isolated individuality. To link the novel Marlowe is an isolated individuality whereas the rest of the characters reflect the commonality. It means immorality is highlighted. Indirectly, it suggests neglecting the immoral act.

Chandler intends to create the space for immorality by attaching the characters with the reason of being immoral. As presented by Chandler, aloofness is the catalyst to immorality. Alienation, the sense of being alone or isolated is not friendly to any of the normal beings. Being alone in a barren land can be understandable but being alone among the mass and between the acquainted people is not endurable. The sense of feeling aloof is not close to the human progress. Instead, it is close to devastation of human cognitive faculty promoting immoral human actions. This paper projects the same thing supported by the ideas of George Simmel and Marx too.

Judy Cox in his “An Introduction to Marx’s Theory of Alienation” expresses that.

“Despite our power to control the natural world, our society is dominated by insecurity, as economic recession and military conflict devastate lives with the apparently irresistible power of natural disasters. The more densely populated our cities become, the more our lives are characterized by feelings of isolation and loneliness” (1).

True to his words, along with our pace of development and the unbelievable control towards the natural world we are simultaneously bearing insecurities. The novel too bears the similar story. The crime rate and insecurity is high in the novel.

Alienation is one of the factors which push people out of the locus of morality. Thereby the paper attempts to reveal the moral deterioration as the impact of alienation among the characters exhibited by Chandler in his novel *The Big Sleep*.

Mental aloofness is more serious than physical aloofness. Most of the characters in *The Big Sleep* are characterized as aloof character by Chandler. The way we understand alienation is being isolated not only when they lack someone next to them, people feel alone desperately when they lack someone who listen them despite he is always surrounded by his relatives, friends and family members. Alienation for different characters meant different. General Sternwood is an elderly father of Vivian and Carmen. Through the text, he is not characterized as the loving father. He never lacks to his daughters throughout the text. He is distant from his children though they live in a same house. The weak bonding within the relation of father and daughter resembles the alienation. Father is alone on one hand whereas daughters too are alone on another hand. In addition, Sternwood is one among the returning war veterans who are very prone to be hunt of being separated from citizen, family and friends. He is accompanied by orchids in the greenhouse. Beyond all, his loneliness reaches the height as he is left behind by Regan who is a great friend of him.

Vivian, the older daughter of Sternwood is characterized as the singled women even after three marriages. Her conjugal life is not successful. She is demonstrated as a lady with secrets of family members. Her inability of being expressive is her part of being alienated. She seems bold enough to debate with Marlowe but the fear is embedded within. She is fighting alone for her father and family prestige. She is enduring Eddie Mars just to protect the pride of his father Sternwood. Pride to Sterwood was life to Sternwood. Saving the pride of father was therefore saving the life of father. In that reference whatever she has done is not the action guided by

immorality rather she is performing her duty towards her family. So she deserves to gain the sympathy of readers. This characterization by Chandler also neutralizes the immoral act as defined in general.

Similarly, Carmen the younger daughter of Sternwood is the attraction of the story who is single and seductive. Chandler characterizes her in a way that her word does not reflect anything rather than her sexual lust. She has got her family numbers; father and elder sister yet she does not share anything. She is left alone in his own condition. She is not interrupted by anyone with her thoughts and actions.

Eddie Mars who has been characterized negatively is supported by his paid helping hands like Canino. He has got his wife but is separated from one another for his vested interest. He in a sense is a lonely fellow. In support, his wife too remains alone in response to her love and belief towards Mars. Despite being husband and wife, they are separated physically and emotionally.

Marlowe too is an alienated fellow. He is single at his 30s and solves his cases alone. He plays the chess alone. His words and actions exhibit his loneliness. "I did not go near the Sternwood family. I went back to the office and sat in my swivel chair and tried to catch up on my foot-dangling"(71). These lines by Marlowe provoke his love towards solitude and isolation. He chose lonely isolation to company by Sternwood family. Similarly, the lines; "I thought about it most of the day. Nobody came into the office. Nobody called me on the phone. It kept on raining" (96). The repeated use of the word "nobody" gives the hint of lonely feeling. He is not interrupted by anyone neither through the call nor through the real meeting. He is just alone and isolated. At the end of the novel he states, "What did it matter where you lay once you are dead?" (129) This line has got the deep meaning; human beings are born alone and are doomed to die alone. They are not accompanied by anyone in his

or her deathbed. So, the place does not matter or the whereabouts of corpse doesn't matter at all. The pain of isolation can be felt through these words. It forecasts how Marlowe has embraced the loneliness.

Chandler's characters in *The Big Sleep* are not social. They are aloof this was or that way. And aloofness is the catalyst to immorality. The fear of alienation indulges the characters in the immoral acts. Sternwood hires Marlowe to find his friend indirectly. Carmen gets seductive to get the partner while Vivian presents her father and family prestige from being secluded by society.

Chandler, the author exhibits that they had a reason to be immoral. Carmen is a mental patient. She had some kinds of mental disorder. The morality and immorality cannot be measured in a mental patient. Vivian was an elderly daughter. She had to take care of his father, sister and family prestige. Her actions were guided by her motto to protect the family from being offensive. General's immorality was too sensible. He could not be responsible in parenting as he was already engaged in the duty as general regardless of Carmen's crime. She is left free. She is not punished.

The sense is created as Marlowe thinks that immorality is just a byproduct of her sickness and the immoral acts performed unconsciously are forgivable. The same thought of author is reflected by Chandler. The author therein novel covers the immorality by providing overwhelming factors as Simmel mentions. According to George Simmel, human actions are guided by those overwhelming factors in the society. The word "overwhelming" refers something irresistible or overpowering. In Chandlers text alienation is that overpowering factor which directs the characters to the different moral and immoral actions. He defends immorality in other sense.

Through the characterization of Marlowe, it seems like the voice of author is the advocacy towards the morality whereas the characterization of rest of the

characters assures that the commonality and majority is guided by immorality. The kind of characterization make the readers believe that the voice of author is conveyed by Marlowe. Marlowe becomes the ideal person. When one judges him professionally he is the model to the lawyers too. In the superficial glance people would expect the same kind of moral stand and professional ethics from all other attorneys and lawyers. It projects how the author has been able to win the heart of readers through the characters of Marlowe. Symbolically, it is the adoration of author towards the morality and ethical value whereas immorality is all about the circumstance which thereby should be treated in a different way beside the established conventional though. There is not any compulsion to punish all immoral acts when the majority of the community is guided by immorality according to the author.

Now in scrutiny, the presentation of the ideas in the line by the author is the justification to his own deeds. He was not satisfied that he was kicked off from his job. He was dedicated towards his job as proven by his elevation in the job positions. He was a smart student and an intellectual. But at the later stage especially after his wife started to be sick he remained depressed. He indulged in drinking habit. He even had affairs with office secretaries. It means he is involved in adultery which is also an immoral act according to Immanuel Kant. But the thing to brainstorm is the person who accepted only Cissy in his life despite the denial of his mother and remained single after his wife's death, how can he be immoral? He definitely involved in the sexual closure of the office staff but he thinks that's not all in all. Chandler might have intended to spray his voice that he had a reason to do so. He sort of became isolated as soon as his wife got sick. He got in depression with the fear that he would be left alone by his wife so was at the last stage of her life. He was mentally unhealthy as Carmen and felling lonely as most of the characters in the text. As the immorality

of Carmen is neutralized because of her illness he too identifies own self with the state of Carmen. He took hard drinks and the office staff as the remedy to his loneliness and fear of alienation. The very fear of alienation became the overwhelming factor in his real life to act him immoral. Despite the maintenance of morality the whole life he got affected by the overpowering loneliness and depression in his life. Therefore he wants the excuses and wants to convey the message among the readers that he had no options. He indirectly expects the sympathy of readers too. This is how he wants to defend his own sexual regression.

The base to claim as he is relating his own life experiences in his novel *The Big Sleep* is that he has brought the references of oil syndicate. In his real life too he was an employee of an oil syndicate. And in the text Sternwood held the oil company which is the core source of their luxurious life. Chandler could have developed the character with some other business but he linked his characters in the text with Oil business which is the reflection of his real life association. Eddie Mars helped in disposing the dead body of Regan in an old well. It means the environment around the oil syndicate was not sound. It was not productive rather it was destructive and decadent. Even Chandler's professional life decayed in oil syndicate. While being the employee at the oil syndicate he fell in trap for his secretaries which soon become the matter of question in his sexual life and wide earned name and fame. It finally dismissed him from his professional life and had to look for the alternative.

To sum up, *The Big Sleep* is Chandler's counter attack to all kinds of accusations claimed on him. He shows his relativity to the nature of Carmen. Carmen's attraction to male is equivalent to Chandler's attraction towards his office workers. Carmen's obsession towards boys was so intense that it directed her to commit crime. Yet, she was not handed over to the police. Her deeds were not

considered to be punishable. The highly moral detective like Marlowe set her free. Her crimes were forgiven just because she was mentally ill and that became the overwhelming force to her. Thereby Chandler's embedded notion is his immoral deeds too are forgivable for he too has been mentally ill or depressed. But he was not forgiven he was punished instead he was kicked out of the office with the accusation of harassment. Chandler thinks that all the people are in "big sleep" therefore he might have chosen the title "The Big Sleep". He thinks people were not just to him as all of them were in big sleep. They could not take the right decision as Marlowe in his text. He believes that people lacked investigation which made them to decide in haste after all they were in "big sleep". "What did it matter where you lay once you were dead?... You just slept the big sleep, not caring about the nastiness of how you died or where you feel" (129). These lines project the frustration of author and hopelessness. Things are gone one who has to die is already dead just because one has to wake was in big sleep. So, the author, Raymond Chandler ends up with his detective novel, the first novel *The Big Sleep* soon after his departure from the oil syndicate as an employee. With the title of the novel "The Big Sleep" he aims to wake the people out of big sleep and wishes to think rationally. All in all this is his appeal to understand his circumstance which in other way is his defense against the accusation of sexual immorality.

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